

PUCK AND UCK

COMPLETE STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

Issued Semi-Monthly—By Subscription \$1.25 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office, January 12, 1898, by Frank Tousey.

No. 10.

NEW YORK, May 18, 1898.

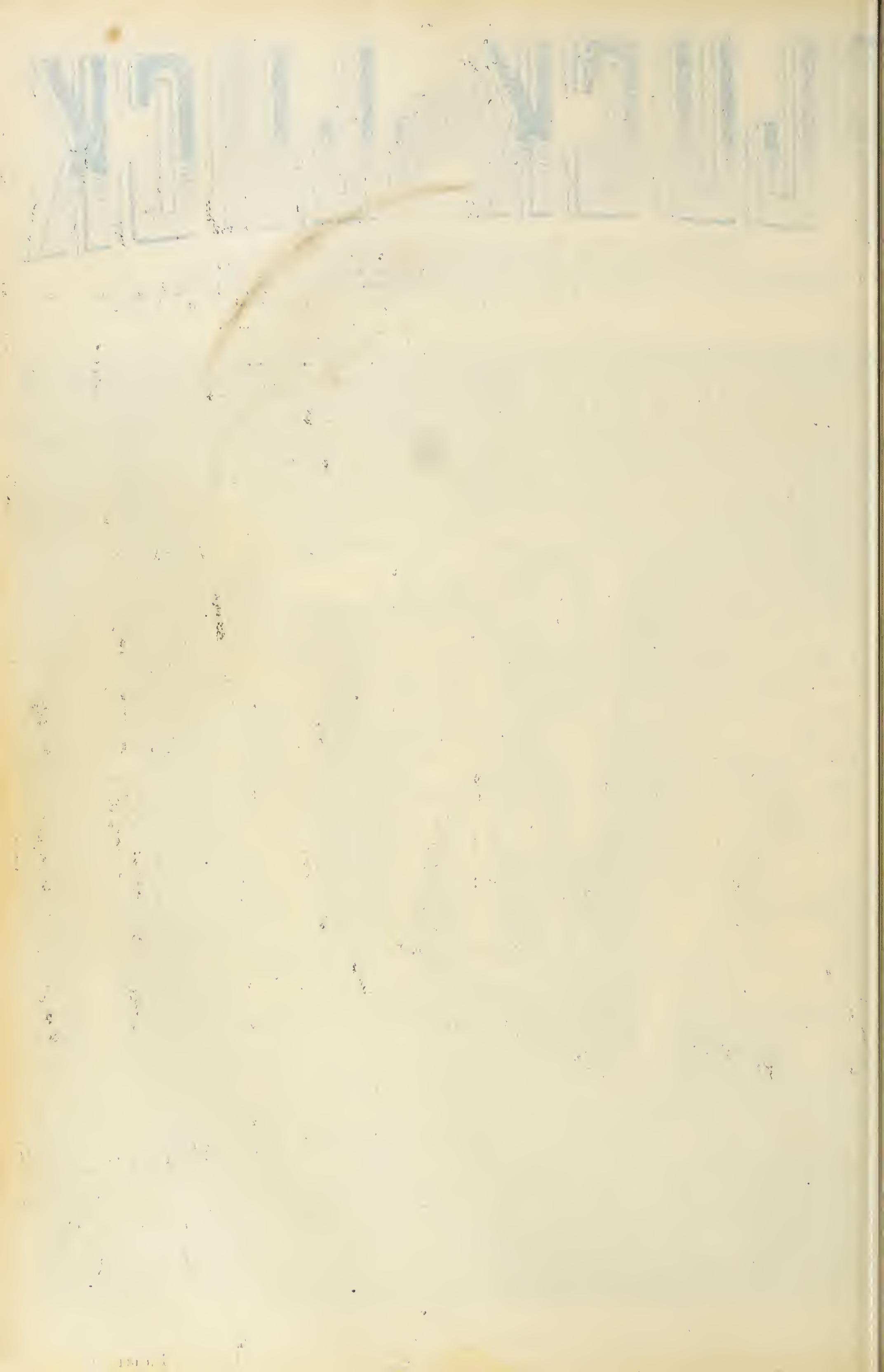
Price 5 Cents.

LITTLE DEAD SHOT THE PRIDE OF THE TRAPPERS.

BY AN OLD SCOUT.



Kneeling on one knee, Little Deadshot brought the rifle to his shoulder. Eagle Eye, bound to the tree, stood as motionless as a statue, with the little nut upon his head, while the Indians were grouped around with expectant looks, and the renegade stood near, ready to give the word.



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LITTLE DEADSHOT, —THE— PRIDE OF THE TRAPPERS.

BY AN OLD SCOUT.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE TRAIL—THE SURPRISE.

A BROAD and trackless forest, where it would almost seem the foot of mortal man had never trod.

The mighty limbs of countless giant trees, thickly covered with their spring verdure, interlacing with each other high overhead, shut out the strong rays of the morning sun and permit only a semi-light to penetrate below.

The only sounds that break the stillness of the woods are the occasional notes of a bird, or perhaps, now and then, the cry uttered by some far off beast of prey.

A scene more lonely or awe inspiring can scarcely be imagined.

But the utter loneliness was not to last.

Presently, had one with a well-trained ear been there to listen, he might have heard a slight rustling among the dry leaves upon the ground, or, it may be, the almost inaudible sound made by the parting of the slender branches of the underbrush. Then, looking down the somber avenue of trees, he might have seen two figures suddenly appear in the vista, and thus the nearly imperceptible sounds would have been explained.

Silently, and yet with steady tread, they approached, the younger a trifle behind the other.

The foremost was a man still under forty, of herculean frame, rather sharp features, and deep-set, piercing eyes.

He was dressed in the usual garb worn by the pioneers and trappers of the early days, consisting of a frock reaching nearly to the knees, and somewhat gaudily trimmed, buckskin leggings, with a fringe running down the seam; moccasins, as fanciful as an Indian's, and his head was covered with a cap of fur, from which depended a tail behind.

This genuine specimen of a backwoodsman was armed with a rifle of immense length, while his belt contained a keen-edged scalping knife, as well as a formidable-looking tomahawk.

His companion was a boy of not more than fourteen years, and his dress was almost the counterpart of the other's, the only difference being, that if anything, his trimmings were more gaudy and fantastic.

His rifle, while being lighter and more suited to his years and strength, was, like his friend's, of extraordinary length, a feature considered very desirable one hundred and twenty years ago.

He, too, was furnished both with a tomahawk and a scalping knife, and in everything, though only a boy, seemed prepared to perform a man's part in the world.

Suddenly a bird, high in the branches overhead, uttered a long-drawn note, thus calling for its mate.

Instantly the boy gave the answering call, and so true to nature

was the sound, that it would have taken a practiced ear, indeed, to have detected the deception. But his companion, evidently, was not of that opinion.

Though still continuing to walk forward, he turned hastily upon the lad, and with a reproving look, said:

"Little Deadshot, thar's some things yer can't improve in much, 'cause why, yer perfect already, so ter speak; but yer a boy yet, recollect that, an' bein' a boy, nat'rally, yer've got a boy's gifts, an' thems likely tew lead yer inter difficulties when yer least expect it. Now jist tell me, have yer got any kind o' an idee, that ef so be thar's a Cherokee skulkin' 'round these 'ere parts he'd mistake that thar mimicry of yourn for ther nat'rals notes o' a bird?"

"I don't know; I thought I done it pretty well, Sol," said the rebuked boy, diffidently.

"Pooty well, eh? Waal, it mighter pass ef these 'ere war peace times an' we war in ole Varginia, o' long their borders o' Pennsylvania; but in these yere forests o' ther 'dark an' bloody grounds,' as ther Injuns call it—Kan-tuck-kee, in thar own tongue--why, here it's different; yer orter see that with half an eye, boy."

"I think I do," said the lad in a low tone.

"Mind now," continued the herculean trapper, "I ain't er findin' no kind o' fault with yer, 'cause this yere is yer fust war path, so ter speak, an' 'tain't 'spectied you'd act 'sactly like an ole scout or warrior ter onct; but, lad, (and here the giant cast a proud glance on the boy), I wanter see yer parfection in everything, jist as yer be in their handlin' o' that thar rifle."

The boy's cheeks flushed with pleasure, for praise from his mighty companion was as sweet to him as censure was painful.

After a moment of silence he ventured to ask:

"And do you really think, Sol, that war has actually broke out between the Colonies and the Cherokees?"

"For sartin sure, Little Deadshot—for sartin sure. Can't be no kind o' mistake 'bout that," was the confident reply.

"But when we left ther head waters of ther Allegheny, the Indians were peaceable enough, yes, and good friends, too."

"That's gospel truth, boy; yes, they war our allies then, an' helpin' us agin ther Frenchers, protectin' of our frontier; but yer see—so ther runner as I got my news from said—when they war on the home march ther authorities forgot tew supply 'em with rations, an' nat'rally enough they helped themselves tew what belonged tew ther settlers; so, in course, this led to a fight, an' some o' ther Injuns got killed. Then they went at it in dead 'arrest, an' heaps o' whites lost their scalps. They let up a leetle while ther snow war onto ther ground, 'cause an' Injun hates tew let his trail be seen too plain, but they're at it agin now, hot an' heavy, I do believe, un' what's worser,

LITTLE DEADSHOT.

"An' I, Little Deadshot, am a gittin' right inter ther thickest suppose, Sol, you wouldn't have started out on this trail, if you'd own this war was going to begin?" said the boy.

"Not likely, lad, not likely," responded the trapper, "but when I'd pledged my word to Seth Sayle for to meet him on the Green at ther mouth o' Robinson's creek, why, I'd got ter do it, yer stand, an' we'll fetch ther Green afore a'nother night, or my ain't Sol Somers—you bet."

"hope we shall," said Little Deadshot, "and find Seth there for us."

"We'll do it ef you kin keep up yer lick, boy."

"I'm yourn to count on, Sol, you know that," said the boy, stoutly. "Yer jist bet I do," said Sol, giving him an affectionate look.

The two now traveled on in silence for some time, each busy with own thoughts. Sol Somers well knew he was incurring great more than that, was conducting the boy, who, though not his flesh and blood, he loved better than his life, into imminent per.

"What ef Seth should disapp'nt me?" he thought, "then I should a tree for sartin sure. But I won't think o' such a thing; he don't do it. It's virtually impossible. Seth is true as a magnet."

So they continued to travel on, each communing with himself. The day passed, and the night caine. At length Sol called a halt, he would not permit a camp fire to be lit. The Indians might see So they ate a scanty meal, and then made a bed of dry leaves a low-bowed tree, near the bank of a little stream.

The boy was soon fast asleep, but the trapper was more wakeful. At least an hour he did not close his eyes, and when at length he rose himself, he would wake with a start at the slightest sound, only relapse into forgetfulness when he was sure no danger was and.

Thus the night passed.

Length morning dawned, and placing his hand on the other's the experienced backwoodsman roused his young companion his slumbers.

They broke their fast in silence, and having slackened their thirst the little stream, again took up the trail.

For two hours they continued on their way, in precisely the same as on the day before, and without exchanging a single word. Length they stood on the crest of a hill, where, being completely sealed themselves, they could see about them for a considerable distance.

Really certain that no enemy was lurking about, Sol now broke lengthened silence.

"That thar's the Green, sure as you're born, boy," he said, pointing off toward a silver stream in the distance, "an' we shall get ther rendevoo, at ther mouth o' Robinson's creek, afore the sun's b overhead."

"I am very glad to hear it," returned Little Deadshot, with a sigh of relief. Then, after an earnest glance about him in every direction: "Have you noticed any signs of the Injuns, Sol?"

"What makes yer ax ther question in that air way?" demanded Sol. In somewhat embarrassed manner.

"Because," responded the boy, "if you hain't, I have."

"Wat d'ye mean?"

"I mean that Cherokee Injuns passed over this 'ere trail not mor'n or ten hours ago."

Little Deadshot had had some slight educational advantages within past two years, and in ordinary conversation, took particular pains the fairly good language; but when laboring under the least excitement, he relapsed into the peculiar forms of expression belonging to frontier, and with which he had been familiar all his life.

"How d'ye know that?" asked his companion, sharply.

"Cause I've s'en ther trail. Ther, look at this," and suddenly he up a half worn moccasin for the inspection of his friend.

"Tomahawks an' sculpin' knives!" exclaimed the astonished trapper.

"Did I pass that thar, an' you pick it up?"

"Tain't no kind o' wonder yer passed it, Sol. It was off to one in ther brush. I happened to see it an' so fetched it along."

"But I didn't mind yer stoppin', lad; ef yer'd a done it, I should'er d it for sartin," said Sol, doubtfully.

"No, I didn't stop," returned Little Deadshot. "I saw it before I

reached it, and picked it up with the muzzle of my rifle, as I came along."

Sol Somers took the moccasin and examined it minutely.

"Yer right," he said, at length, "that thar bit o' deer-skin is Cherokee, for sartin, an' it war on an Injun's hoof not mor'n eight or ten hours ago. I'd know'd ther pesky critters war about, but I allowed as how yer hadn't noticed it. Boy, I'm mor'n an' more proud on yer, an' so'll the whole gang be when I tell 'em o' your behavior on your fust war path."

Again the boy flushed with pleasure.

"An' now," continued the trapper, as he raised his rifle from the ground, "let's dig ahead, 'cause ther sooner we find Seth, the sooner we'll be better off."

They descended the hillside and plunged into the woods bordering the Green river. For sometime they continued on their way. At length they came to the mouth of a smaller stream—a tributary of the greater.

"This 'ere's the spot," exclaimed the trapper, dropping the butt of his rifle on the ground, "an' here's Seth's tracks—I know'em, an' that's the ashes o' his camp fire—but whar's Seth?"

Little Deadshot glanced about him uneasily.

At that instant the sharp crack of a rifle broke on the air, and a whizzing bullet, after nearly grazing his head, buried itself in the trunk of a tree behind him.

"To kiver—to kiver!" yelled Sol, excitedly. "The varmints be upon us!"

CHAPTER II.

THE FIGHT—SURROUNDED.

In an instant Little Deadshot had sought the shelter of a friendly tree, while Sol Somers concealed his herculean frame behind another, nearby.

"Now keep yer eyes an' ears open, Little Deadshot, an' show ther varmin what kind o' an edication yer've had," admonished the trapper, in a serious tone.

"I won't disgrace you, Sol, never fear," responded the boy, with flashing eyes, and eagerly he looked for some signs of the hidden foe.

Presently he saw a rifle protruding from behind a tree at some distance away, and instantly knew that the savage was taking aim at Sol, whose huge form was but imperfectly concealed.

Just as the Indian was about to fire, the boy caught a glimpse of his eye. Quick as thought his rifle rang out, and his victim fell to the ground, the bullet having penetrated the brain through the organ of sight.

"Now, Sol," he exclaimed, "get behind some other tree—quick! That fellow would have done for you if I hadn't been a little mite too soon for him."

"You're right, lad. I'll do it."

And like a flash Sol changed his position, selecting an immense beech for his new cover.

Not less than twenty shots rang out during his momentary exposure, but fortunately none struck him, and as one or two of the Indians, in their eagerness, permitted a portion of their bodies to come into view, he quickly turned and fired.

Down went a giant warrior, and then yells of rage and anger arose upon the air.

"Keep yer eye peeled, Little Deadshot; ther pesky varmints'll be trying to play us some dirty trick next. I know ther critters."

"I'll look out, Sol," returned Little Deadshot, cheerfully; and having reloaded his rifle, he now waited for another chance to show his skill.

Twice while he was loading shots were fired at him, one bullet passing within half an inch of his fur cap, and the other cutting its way through the buckskin of his left legging just above the knee.

The Indian who fired the last shot set up a yell of triumph, and incautiously thrust out his head with the expectation of seeing Little Deadshot drop to his knees.

His curiosity cost him his life, for no sooner had the boy caught a glimpse of the miscreant than he turned loose his charge. The savage fell, with a bullet hole through the very center of his forehead.

"Well done, boy," exclaimed Sol Somers, exultingly. "Yer make me proud as er'n old turkey cock. I'm jist delighted—an' hold on er minute."

The trapper had just caught a glimpse of one of the enemy, and now he quickly raised his rifle and fired.

The savage dropped his weapon with a yell of pain, the bullet having passed through his right arm, breaking the bone near the shoulder.

"He ain't dead, but I reckon as how he won't be very troublesome any more to-day, 'tany rate," muttered Sol, with a grim smile of satisfaction.

At that instant no less than a dozen shots were fired by the Indians, and two of them passed directly through Sol's fur cap.

"Tomahawks an' sculpin' knives!" exclaimed the trapper, hastily concealing himself. "I believe I'm growin' a little kereless."

"Yes, Sol, there's no mistake about that. I notice you are just a little reckless, or careless," said Little Deadshot, "and I do wish you would be more thoughtful, for I don't want to be left here all alone to fight the bloody savages."

"Tain't my natur', nohow," muttered the trapper, in a troubled tone; "an' pears like o' them shots kim from another direction."

Just then Little Deadshot fired again and brought down his man.

No sooner had this savage struck the earth than a terrible yell rang out, and the two whites acting on the defensive, at once saw there was quite a stir among the Indians.

"I wonder what's the matter," said Little Deadshot, curiously.

"I reckon as how yer fotched a chief—a big Injun, that time," said Sol, with a chuckle. "Yes, that's it. I kin jist make out ther varmint as he lies thar."

At that moment one of the Indians got down on his hands and knees and approached the dead brave with the intention of drawing his body under cover. Instantly Sol raised his weapon and fired.

Owing to the Indian's position the bullet struck him in the top of the head, and in an instant he was lying dead beside the chief.

Thus far Sol and Little Deadshot had escaped unharmed, while at the same time they had done fearful execution among the foe, Sol having slain three and wounded one, and Little Deadshot having killed four outright.

But the two brave whites were contending against fearful odds, there being no less than fifty Indians opposed to them, so that it could hardly be expected they would be able to hold out much longer.

The boy had just succeeded in reloading his weapon, while Sol had not yet rammed home the ball he had at that moment dropped in the muzzle of his piece, when both became aware that the enemy were executing a flank movement—a feature of warfare, by the way, never long neglected by Indians, when in sufficient force to accomplish it successfully.

"Ther jig's up, boy, ef they leave eny o' ther pesky critters in front, which, in course, they'll do," said Sol, somewhat gloomily, "an' so we mought as well make up our minds to knock under, 'cause why, we can't take it very long in front an' on ther flank at one an' ther same time."

"Can't we retreat to that little neck of land where the two rivers come together?" asked the boy, suddenly.

"We kin try it, but I reckon as how 'twon't do no kind o' good. It'll jist help us to hold out a few minutes longer—that's all. But, hows'er, as I said afore, we kin try it on."

At that moment half a dozen shots were fired by the flankers.

"Now's our time," said Sol, and away they rushed, like the wind, toward the narrow neck of land between the river and its tributary.

A score of shots were fired after them, and Sol was slightly wounded in the side, but otherwise they escaped unharmed.

Each succeeded in finding a protecting tree, and now the unequal battle commenced anew.

At length a shot was fired from the branches of a tree which stood on the river bank, and Sol's hat was carried away.

Little Deadshot almost immediately detected the party who had fired the shot, and in the twinkling of an eye sent the messenger of death after him.

The savage dropped from the limb upon which he had been crouching like a sack of meal, and then there was another form revealed.

Sol Somers gave utterance to an exclamation of surprise.

"What is it?" asked Little Deadshot.

"Why! that 'tother un up thar is a white critter," said the trapper, in great disgust.

"Then he's a renegade!" cried the boy, fiercely, "and I'll have blood if I never fire another shot after it!"

"Yer've got ther rights on it, boy," said Sol, approvingly, "fer all ther despicable critters on this yere airth, a white Injun is despicablist. Yer kin put that down fer sartin sure."

"I believe you," said Little Deadshot, with flashing eyes.

There had been a cessation of the firing for a moment or so, during which both Sol and the boy had succeeded in reloading their pieces, and now, while looking guardedly about him, Little Deadshot was at the same time doing his best to single out the white.

In this he was not successful. If Sol had really seen what he believed he had, the man had already so changed his position as to again quite out of sight.

It was at this moment that they were startled by a movement behind them.

Both turned at the same instant, and beheld no less than twelve savages start up from the water's edge.

They at once took in the situation. They were completely surrounded!

CHAPTER III.

THE RENEGADE—HURLING THE TOMAHAWK.

LITTLE DEADSHOT instinctively raised his rifle, and was about to fire on the foremost of the enemy, when a mocking voice behind him arrested his attention.

"Better let up thar, youngster," it said. "Twon't do no manne good; you'd only suffer ther more when yer come to ther torment."

The boy turned quickly, and saw before him the renegade, who returned his astonished look with a sardonic smile of satisfaction.

Sol Somers caught sight of him at the same moment.

"Tomahawks an' scalpin' knives!" he roared, in a tone of deadly hatred and disgust, "ef it ain't that miserable varmint again, Lank Larkin!"

"Ye'd better keep a civil tongue inter yer head, Sol Somers, Eagle Eye, whichever yer see fit ter call yerself now-a-days," said the renegade, menacingly; "'cause ef yer rile my blood now, 'twill be ther worst for yer, I kin jest tell yer that."

"Shall I tumble him over, Sol?" asked Little Deadshot, in an eager whisper.

"Not now, boy, 'twouldn't do no good, an' it mought bring on ther own ind the quicker."

By this time the Indians had drawn close about the two, and their chance of escape was effectually cut off.

A dignified savage now approached them, and after saying a few words to the renegade in the Cherokee tongue, began to address them in the same language.

The renegade, drawing near, acted as interpreter.

"He says he is Wonsatasate, a great chief among his people," explained the interpreter, when the Indian had begun to speak, "and he welcomes you as palefaces worthy to suffer at the hands of the Tsaraghees."

"He's mighty good," said Sol Somers, or Eagle Eye, as he was usually called among the trappers and Indians on the frontier; "an' he added, in a sarcastic tone, "yekin jist tell him that I shall consider it as a particular act o' bravery on the part o' himself an' his warriors ef he torments this 'ere boy who's scarcely up to my belt."

This was duly repeated to the chief. His reply, literally translated, was as follows:

"Ugh! little man great warrior, much kill Indians. His bullets fit the lives of my braves when he bids them fly. He should be big suffer."

"Yes," said Eagle Eye, complacently, "I'll allow he's sartin dead every time; that 'ere's as sure as you're a gang o' murderin' savages an' that you, Lank Larkin, orter have your precious neck stretched as fer the rest o' it, that's a lie."

The chief, not being able to speak English, did not understand a word of this, and, unfortunately for our friends, the same was true of all, or nearly all the savages composing the band that had taken them prisoners, so that both parties were dependent upon the renegade.

party to rightly interpret what was said; and as he was the mortal enemy of Eagle Eye, it can easily be understood that he would construe anything that fell from his lips to his disadvantage.

He now told Wonsatasate that the trapper had most grossly insulted him.

This being understood by the chief and those about him, black and angry looks were cast on the prisoners, and more than one drew his tomahawk threateningly.

At this movement Little Deadshot grasped his beloved rifle more firmly, and mechanically raised it toward his face.

Instantly a howl went up, and a dozen savages sprang forward and wrenched the weapon from his hands. In a moment, almost, both he and Eagle Eye were completely disarmed.

Then the conversation, with the renegade as a medium, was renewed.

But suddenly, Little Deadshot, who, as the reader will have observed, was keen as a brier, turned to Sol, and in an earnest whisper said:

"Don't speak another word—not another word; this miserable wretch is turning all you say against us, I can see it plainly."

"I 'low yer're right, boy," returned the trapper, in the same low tone. "Yes, an' I s'pected as much jist a minit ago; not er 'nuther word will they git outer me ef I die for't," and from that instant the giant trapper became as dumb as an oyster.

The Indians did not know what to make of it, and through Larkin threatened to torture him if he did not answer their questions. And as he still maintained his silence he was seized and preparations made for biading him to a tree.

Little Deadshot now sprang forward, and attracting the chief's attention, pointed first to his tongue, then to the renegade, and shook his head.

The brave seemed to be uncertain as to his meaning.

The boy, seeing this, picked up a perfectly straight twig from the ground, and showing it to the chief, pointed to Sol, while at the same time touching his own tongue with his own hand. He then bent the twig and pointed to the renegade, thus plainly indicating that Sol was a straight tongue or truth-teller, while the other was a crooked tongue or liar.

Language could not have been plainer. The Indians understood perfectly, and looked with admiration on the boy.

But while Little Deadshot had thus suddenly gained favor with the redskins, he made an enemy of Lank Larkin, who now began to talk vehemently with the chief and those about him.

What he said neither Eagle Eye nor Little Deadshot could comprehend; but both saw that many of the Indians were powerfully influenced by his words, and that dark and dangerous looks were being cast upon them.

The binding of the trapper had, by the boy's prompt and impulsive action, been suspended. It was now resumed again, and when it was completed Sol Somers was made as fast to the tree as though he had been a part of its trunk; it being utterly impossible for him to move any part of his body, excepting his head, which was purposely left free.

All now withdrew to some distance, forming an imperfect circle, which was open on the side toward the prisoner bound to the tree.

Little Deadshot, from this moment, was jealously watched and guarded, being under the especial charge of two fierce-looking braves, who were careful not to let him get beyond their reach.

For a moment there was an expectant silence, then the chief, advancing within the circle, raised his hand.

Instantly a young brave sped forward with uplifted tomahawk. For a moment he poised it in his hand. Then, taking careful aim at the helpless prisoner's head, he hurled it from him.

Cleaving the air it sped toward the living mark.

The next instant he saw it quivering in the tree, so close to the trapper's head that he thought it must have grazed his cheek.

But what surprised him most was that Sol had not moved even a muscle of his face; indeed, he had scarcely winked his eyes!

"That's nerve!" thought the boy. "Sol deserves the reputation he earned long since on the Monongahela. By Jove, I'm proud of him. I do hope the pesky wretches will not murder him."

Another young Indian now advanced into the circle, and after going through a variety of fantastic maneuvers, calculated to produce fear on the part of the prisoner, he hurled his tomahawk.

It struck the side of the tree close to Sol's head, and carrying away a chip of the bark, was lost in the woods beyond.

Eagle Eye gave a laugh of derision—a laugh that, in a more quiet way, was indulged in by nearly all of the spectators.

The warrior who had made so poor a throw slunk out of sight, ashamed and abashed.

Another and still another came forward and threw their weapons at the living mark, all striving to see how near they could come to his head without drawing blood.

It is no more than just to say that nearly all made excellent throws, one even touching his cheek, and literally pinning him to the tree by his beard.

At length, tiring of this excitement, and seeing that it produced no perceptible effect on the prisoner, another method of inspiring fear was resorted to—throwing the knife.

This was a much more dangerous pastime, and Sol Somers thought sure his time had come; yet, after half an hour of the pleasant amusement, he came out of it unharmed.

A consultation now took place between Wonsatasate and his chief warriors, and it was resolved to put the prisoner to the test of the rifle.

Eagle Eye, who was jealously watching all the movements of his enemies, soon understood what was to take place, and concluded that, however miraculous his escape from harm had been thus far, no miracle could save him now.

He arrived at this conclusion from his consummate knowledge of the Indian character and ability.

However skillful a redman may be with a bow and arrow, or in throwing the tomahawk and knife, he can never approach a white man in the use of the rifle. This the trapper thoroughly understood, and he more than expected that when his enemies saw they made bad shots, in their irritation they would become reckless and kill him; and, in truth, his fears were likely to be realized.

It took some time to determine who should take part in the new experiment, and in what order they should fire.

It was settled at last, and the firing began.

Shot after shot was discharged, the marksmen being so near the victim that he could look right down their rifle barrels; still, he never flinched.

Many very bad shots were made, some of them not hitting the tree at all, and others slightly wounding the prisoner, one bullet, indeed, cutting his scalp a little over the left ear.

Eagle Eye could not repress a sneer, and at length broke out in his righteous indignation.

"Yer pesky varmlnts!" he exclaimed; "do yer call that shootin'? Yer orter be ashamed on yerselves. Yer orter be made ter give up yer weapons to wimmen. Why, that thar boy kin double ther distance an' discount yer every time."

"What does he say?" asked Wonsatasate, curiously.

"He calls your glorious warriors pigs, and says they know not how to shoot," explained the renegade; "more than that, he defies you all, and says he scorns you for women."

"Why paleface Injun not tell the truth—tell all the truth?" asked a deep, calm voice, just behind Larkin.

The vile wretch started as though an adder had stung him, and turning quickly, discovered the glittering eyes of a tall and noble-looking warrior fastened upon him.

"Why you lie, eh?" asked the new-comer.

"Oganasoda, the great chief!" murmured the Indians, in awe.

The newly arrived chief paid no attention to the homage that was being bestowed on him on every hand, but persisted in his question.

"Why you lie, paleface Injun, eh?"

The renegade was abashed.

CHAPTER IV.

A TERRIBLE ORDEAL.

AN involuntary cry of consternation burst from the lips of Little Deadshot, as the terrible tomahawk left the young Indian's hand.

The great chief suddenly turned from him in disgust, and began talking with Wonsatasate.

After a few moments the two approached Little Deadshot.

"Little man, great warrior, no miss with rifle, eh?" asked the newcomer.

"I can shoot very well," said the boy, modestly.

"You shoot very well now, maybe let go free."

"All right!" exclaimed the lad, joyously. "I'll do my best."

The two chiefs now called the renegade, and when he left them, a few minutes later, there was the look of a fiend in his eyes.

He went directly to the great beech tree, and seemed to be searching for something on the ground beneath it.

Presently he picked up a nut, and with it returned to the spot where Little Deadshot was standing.

"Do you see that?" he asked, with a grim smile.

"Yes," responded the boy, wonderingly.

"Waal, I'm goin' ter put it onter that ole skunk's head, an' yer've got ter knock it off with yer rifle without touchin' his skin. Kin yer do it?"

The boy turned deathly pale.

"I don't know," he said, scarcely above his breath.

"In course yer kin," called out Sol. "Now's yer time, boy, tew show ther varmints what yer made on. Let 'em see yer've got ther narve, an' don't let that thar miserable whelp skeer yer."

"I'll do it, Sol," exclaimed the boy, straightening up and looking about him with flashing eyes.

The renegade now went forward to place the little nut on the trapper's head. Just as he turned away the boy saw something glittering at his feet.

He gave a hasty glance about him, and then managed to stumble forward and fall directly over the spot.

When he arose the glittering object was gone.

The renegade now returned, and at the same time an Indian advanced and placed the boy's rifle in his hand.

As he took it he turned to Larkin and said:

"I must reload this piece before I fire at that nut."

"Very well; you can do so," was the reply.

Little Deadshot gave a hasty glance at him.

At the top of a distant tree a squirrel was quietly feeding.

"See," he said; "I will put a bullet through his eye."

He raised his rifle.

Crack!

The squirrel fell to the ground.

Instantly a dozen redskins started after it. When it was produced, lo! the bullet had passed in at one eye and out at the other.

By this time the rifle was reloaded to his satisfaction, and having signified that he was ready, he was conducted to his station.

On looking around he was surprised to find that the great chief was nowhere in sight.

But now the decisive moment had come, and so, calmly kneeling on one knee, Little Deadshot brought the rifle to his shoulder. Eagle Eye, bound to the tree, stood as motionless as a statue, with the little nut upon his head, while the Indians were grouped around with expectant looks, and the renegade stood near, ready to give the word.

There was one moment of awful silence, and then came the command:

"Fire!"

Instantly the rifle rang out. The savages sent up an awful yell, and Little Deadshot, pale as a corpse, fell forward on his face.

CHAPTER V.

AT LIBERTY AGAIN—THE AMBUSH.

SOL SOMERS, or Eagle Eye, the great trapper of the Monongahela and Allegheny, had, for more than five long years, been a father to Little Deadshot, and the boy loved him with the true and abiding affection of a son.

Under these circumstances it can be easily imagined what courage and nerve it must have required, on the part of the lad, to calmly place a rifle at his shoulder and essay to shoot so small an object as a

beechnut from the head of his beloved benefactor. Stimulated, however, by the encouraging words of his friend, he had resolved to make the trial, and at length, as we have already seen, fired the shot.

As the detonation broke the stillness of the forest, the boy, who had been wrought up to the utmost tension, could stand no more, and suddenly giving way, he fell forward on his face, while at the same time the Indians sent up a yell of astonishment and admiration, and the renegade bit his nether lip with vexation and disappointment.

The young marksman had shot the nut from the head of the trapper, and had not so much as injured a single hair!

"What's ther matter? Hes anything happened to that thar boy, will someone tell me?" asked Sol, with an anxiety he had not for a moment shown on his own account.

No one paid any attention to his question, and for some time the prisoner suffered ten-fold the agony of mind he had endured while undergoing the ordeals to which he had been subjected.

But suddenly the noble form of Oganasdoda advanced toward the prostrate boy, and bending over him with a look of tender solicitude on his face, he raised him in his arms.

In abrupt and peremptory tones he asked for water. With the rapidity of thought a dozen braves hurried to the stream, and soon the great chief was bathing the lad's face and moistening his lips with the refreshing fluid.

Presently Little Deadshot opened his eyes.

He looked with wonder into the face of the chief, and for a time seemed to have forgotten where he was or what had passed.

Suddenly all came back to him, and in a quick, anxious tone, he asked:

"Is Sol safe? Oh, tell me, is Sol safe?"

"Great trapper of the eagle eye no harmed," returned the chief. "Little man, straight eye, never miss mark!"

"Oh, how glad I am!" exclaimed Little Deadshot, with a sigh of relief.

Then, after lying quietly for a moment with his eyes closed:

"You will let us go now, won't you? We never meant to harm you or your people. We didn't come into this country to interfere with the Indians."

"Why you come here?" asked the chief, with evident interest.

"We had an appointment with Seth Sayle, and were going to trap with him down the Green to the Ohio."

"Sayle—Sayle," muttered the chief, with a dark frown, "he friend of Flying Foot, eh?"

"Flying Foot!" exclaimed the boy. "I don't know. I never heard of him!"

The chief regarded him suspiciously for a moment, but as he looked into the depths of his truthful eyes, became convinced of his veracity, and in a softened tone, said:

"Little Sure Kill stand up," and as Little Deadshot arose to his feet, in a wheedling voice asked:

"Like live with great chief—be his son? Soon be great warrior, mighty chief, pride of the Cherokees!"

"I want to be where Sol is," replied the boy, firmly. "Where he goes, I will go. Where he lives, I will live."

"Very well," said the chief, hastily, but in a disappointed tone; "you both go free—go where please," and he at once ordered the prisoners to be set at liberty, and their arms to be restored to them.

It was with a reluctant step that Lank Larkin went forward to cut the bonds of his ancient enemy, but such being the orders of the supreme authority, he was forced to comply.

Eagle Eye stretched his stiffened limbs, and stamped his benumbed feet with great satisfaction on finding himself once more free, and then, as he received his weapons from the Indians, turned to the renegade, and in a voice of withering scorn, said:

"Lank, ye varmint, yer worse even than I thought yer! But we shall meet ag'in, an' thin I'll pay yer for ther part yer've takin in this day's proceedin's! True, me an' ther boy's come to no great harm, but that ain't your fault, an' I shall treat yer ther same as though we had!"

"Yer may jist bet yer sweet life we shall meet ag'in, Eagle Eye," said the other, in fierce tones; "an' that, too, afore yer 'spect it, an' then I miss my guess if either you or ther cub git off so easy as yer have this 'ere time!"

Both Sol and Little Deadshot now bade farewell to the Indian, even shaking hands with the chiefs and such as evinced an inclination to

be friendly; but Sol noticed, with some uneasiness, that quite a number held aloof, and seemed to regard their being set at liberty with sullen silence and discontent.

Without appearing to notice this, however, they passed on and plunged into the forest. Taking a trail running almost parallel with the river, they hurried forward and were soon out of sight.

"Thank God we are well out of that scrape!" exclaimed Little Deadshot at last, with a sigh of relief.

"Don't let's crow till we're outer the woods," said his more experienced companion, dryly.

"What do you mean?" asked Little Deadshot, uneasily.

"Why, I hain't got no sorter confidence in ther critters. That ther Oganasdoda is ther only decent un among 'em, an' some on 'em be right down ugly—you bet!"

"What! Sol, you don't believe they'll follow us and make us prisoners again, do you?" asked the boy, in surprise.

"Worser nor that, Hal, worser nor that!"

"Pray, what do mean?"

"I mean that now's ther time to jist keep our eyes peeled, 'cause why, them ther critters'll be shootin' at us from behind some rock or stump afore we know it, 'specially ther friends o' them we killed. They have to do it, it's thar natur'—Injun natur'!"

"What shall we do, Sol?"

"Git over ther ground as fast as we kin, an' catch up with friends, if possible."

"Where do you expect to find friends, now that we've missed Seth?"

"Down ther river a piece."

"Sol," asked the boy, suddenly, after a lengthened pause, "who is Flying Foot?"

"What?" exclaimed Sol, coming to an abrupt halt, and turning sharply on his companion with a surprised look.

"I asked who a person named Flying Foot could be," said Little Deadshot, regarding his old friend curiously.

"What do you know about him?" asked Eagle Eye, in an uneasy tone.

"The great chief asked me if Seth was not a friend of his, and I thought he intimated that they were together."

"Oh, hol!" exclaimed Sol, starting forward at a more rapid pace; "now I understand. If they be together and we kin find 'em, I don't give a tinker's copper fur all the Cherokees a-top of ther yarth. Come, I think I know whar to go. Don't let ther grass grow under yer feet, Little Deadshot!"

For more than an hour the two kept on their way without slackening their gait in the least. At length they came to a sort of glen, through which ran a swift but shallow stream.

Little Deadshot approaching its banks, dropped upon his knees in order to quench his burning thirst.

The action saved his life, for at that instant a rifle shot rang out, and the bullet sped past, just over his head.

The boy did not attempt to arise, but seizing his rifle, he dodged into the underbrush close by, and quickly reached a large tree where he had the stream at his back.

Meanwhile Eagle Eye had not been idle. No sooner had he seen the attempt on the life of the boy, than dashing forward with his tomahawk in his left hand, he reached the tree from behind which the shot had been fired, and before the miscreant could retreat, buried the weapon to the very helve in his head.

At the same time he drew upon himself the fire of not less than half a dozen rifles.

He escaped without a scratch, and quickly retreating to the other side of the same tree, began to look about him in order to calculate the force of the enemy.

Some moments passed, and the woods seemed almost as silent as the grave. Not a sign of an Indian could be seen, save only the one at the foot of the tree behind which the trapper crouched.

All at once he noticed a feathered head cautiously thrust from behind a tree scarcely ten feet away.

He raised his rifle, but before he could take aim, a shot rang out from the direction of the stream, and the redskin fell with a bullet through his brain.

"That's Little Deadshot's work," muttered Eagle Eye, in a tone of satisfaction.

CHAPTER VI.

FLYING FOOT, THE TERROR OF "THE DARK AND BLOODY GROUND."

A yell of bitter rage followed the fall of Little Deadshot's victim, and a volley was instantly poured in on the spot from whence he had fired, but fortunately without result.

It soon became evident, however, that the Indians were resolved to press the fight to a swift conclusion, and the usual method of getting around on to the flank and into the rear of their enemy, was resorted to.

The firing now became rapid, and both Eagle Eye and the boy were beginning to lose heart, as they saw themselves more and more closely surrounded, when suddenly, an altogether new turn was given to the situation, by the sharp and angry crack of two rifles in the enemy's rear, followed by the fall of two of the most conspicuous of the savages.

Immediately the redskins became disconcerted, and seemed hardly to know which way to turn.

The trapper and his companion were not slow to take advantage of this indecision, and quickly they brought down two of the enemy.

Their shots were followed by the brace of rifles which had before spoken, and still another pair bit the dust.

Now, those remaining of the foe took to flight, and both Sol and the boy distinctly saw Lank Larkin, who until this moment had managed to keep himself well out of sight, rush from the shelter of a tree, and disappear in the underbrush beyond.

With an angry yell, Eagle Eye darted after him, with Little Deadshot not far behind.

For nearly a quarter of an hour they kept up the chase, when they were obliged to abandon it, and confess that the renegade had escaped them. But it had not been altogether without result, as the boy had succeeded in bringing down another redskin by the way.

Slowly they now retraced their steps to the scene of the late fight, and as they walked along, Little Deadshot asked:

"Who do you think it was that came to our assistance, Sol?"

"Can't jist say, boy; but good friends, I reckon."

"Don't you think it may be Seth Sayle and his friend?"

"More'n likely," was the brief reply.

Seeing that his companion was disinclined to talk, the boy refrained from asking further questions, and for the rest of the way they walked on in silence.

Presently they came in sight of the battle-ground, and at the same moment discovered two men, evidently scouts or trappers, busy with the dead.

One was possessing himself of the weapons of the slain, while the other, with a dexterity no Indian ever surpassed, was securing their scalps.

The first was a man of some forty-eight years, and in dress and build was almost the counterpart of Sol Somers.

This was Seth Sayle, with whom the reader will become more familiar in the progress of this veracious history.

The other man was at least ten years younger than his companion, and by reason of so many peculiarities, both in dress and appearance, deserves, at least, a brief description.

He was not over tall, being no more than five feet and eight inches, and at most would not have weighed above one hundred and thirty pounds.

His skin was very dark, having a yellowish-brown tinge, and his hair and beard, which were black and well sprinkled with gray, were long, flowing from his head and face in curly, tangled masses.

His eyes were deep-set and restless, having an uneasy, far-away expression, and at the same time they appeared to glow like burning coals of fire.

He was clothed in dressed skins and furs from head to foot, but all were black as jet, that either being their natural hue, or they having been so colored by the wearer.

The only relief to this somber dress was what seemed to be a band of blood about his waist, but what in reality was a belt, into which a pistol, a tomahawk, and when not in his hand, a scalping-knife were thrust. There were also red feathers sewed upon his moccasins, and several of these, sticking straight out from his heels behind, had the appearance of miniature wings, and gave him the name by which he was known throughout all the region of the "dark and bloody ground," Flying Foot.

"It is Seth Sayle!" exclaimed Little Deadshot, in a tone of relief.

"Yes," responded his companion, quickly, "an' that thar's Flying Foot with him!"

"That Flying Foot!" cried the boy, in surprise. "Why! you're mistaken, Sol, that's—"

"Sh! boy, don't let that ere tongue o' yourn tell any man's secrets in these ere woods, or yer mought live to regret it. Remember! that thar black-lookin' critter is Flying Foot, ther terror o' ther redskins, from ther great lakes on ther north to ther Tennessee on ther south, an' nobody else!"

"I'll remember, Sol," said the boy, in an awe-struck whisper.

By this time they had attracted the attention of the two men, who were now quietly waiting to receive them.

Seth was the first to greet them, and grasping his old friend by the hand, he gave him a hearty welcome.

Sol then brought the boy forward, and said:

"Seth Sayle, ye've call to be proud o' this 'ere kid 'long o' me. He's saved my life this day most remarkable."

"I re'ice to hear sich a good account on er, Little Deadshot," exclaimed Seth, grasping the boy by the hand. "I'm proud to think I had a hand in yer edication!"

Flying Foot now came up, and after greeting Eagle Eye, turned a penetrating look on the boy. For more than a moment he regarded him in silence, then, in an emphatic tone, he said:

"Hal Hunter, if your conduct bears out your good looks, I shall like you, and that is saying a good deal for me."

Instantly both Sol and Seth flushed up with pleasure, and they seemed quite as proud as a young mother, when her first born is taken favorable notice of by some great man.

"Yer'll jist 'low me tew remark, Flying Foot," said Eagle Eye, in a deferential tone, "that thar boy has succeeded in gaining a name fur hisself, an' so ginerally is he known by it, that I tell no lie when I say ther name ole Tom Hunter gin him years agone, is now so seldom spoke, that it's mostly forgotten."

"Ah! And what is the name he has gained for himself?" asked the strange being, curiously.

"Little Deadshot," responded Sol, proudly.

"Little Deadshot!" repeated Flying Foot, with another earnest glance at the boy. "And can you assure me, Sol, that he deserves it?"

"It fits him to a ha'r—ay, much closer than sich names ginerally fit older men. Why, his skill with ther rifle saved my life this very day. It's simply perfection, I do assure yer," and then Sol told the story of their capture and enlargement.

"Little Deadshot, come here," said Flying Foot, reaching out his hand.

The boy advanced, and modestly placed his own in the palm of the other.

"From this moment I'm your friend," said Flying Foot, "and I see, to a certainty, that you are destined to become the pride of the trappers of this region."

"And now, friends," he continued, turning to the others, "we will finish our work here, and then, take up the trail. To-night, when we have built our camp-fire, I shall have a serious matter to lay before you," and again the strange being went to work, denuding the fallen braves of their scalps.

"Seth, don't leave a single weapon lying about—not even so much as a tooth-pick," he called out, in a warning tone. "It's a wrong and a shame for the French or the colonies to put fire-arms into the hands of savages, to be used by them in murdering women and children; and I, for one, will take care to deprive them of them whenever I have opportunity."

"We'll second you in that," said Sol, emphatically.

"How many scalps have yer took, Flying Foot?" asked Seth, when he had reckoned up the number of weapons he had found.

"Eight," was the grim reply.

"Thin, that's ther tally of the slain," said Seth.

"Not so," pnt in Sol. "Little Deadshot fatched another o' ther varmints a piece off that away."

"Why didn't you bring away his hair?" asked Flying Foot, with a frown.

"Ther boy don't think scalpin' belongs to a white man's gifts," explained Sol, "an' I was ahead on ther trail o' that pesky white Injun, Lank Larkin, at ther time!"

"Boy," said Flying Foot, turning squarely on Little Deadshot,

"let me explain this to you. In a warfare like this we are carrying on against the Indians, we've no choice but to fight the devil with fire; we must strike terror to their souls, and so long as they find their dead unscalped, they set it down that we've won no more than half a victory, or, worse still, no victory at all." Then, abruptly: "Where did the redskin fall?"

Little Deadshot described the spot.

"Wait for me here," said Flying Foot, briefly, and in an instant he had disappeared.

Sol and Hal had now assisted Seth in hiding the dead bodies of the Indians, by throwing brush over them. They then made four bundles of the captured weapons, three of which consisted of rifles and tomahawks, and the fourth of knives and other light tools.

By the time this was done, Flying Foot was again with them.

"I found him," was all he said, at the same time touching a bloody lock hanging at his red belt. Then, without asking a question, he seized one of the largest bundles, and taking the lead, plunged into the forest, closely followed by the others, Seth Sayle's gaunt form bringing up the rear.

CHAPTER VII.

FLYING FOOT'S RETREAT—THE HOOT OF THE OWL—ON THE TRACK—THE WORK OF DEATH COMMENCED.

FOR more than two long hours they traveled on, hardly a word being spoken by the way.

At length, just as Little Deadshot was beginning to feel very tired, Sol, who was next ahead of him, exclaimed, in a low tone of satisfaction:

"Yes! thar it is—thar it is; I know'd it!"

"What is it, Sol? I see nothing," said the boy.

"Why, Flying Foot's camp!"

"Where? I don't see the first sign of a camp!"

"I reckon not," chuckled Sol. "Flying Foot's too old a bird for that. But it's thar all ther same—right inter that thar gap, beyond thar tall tree."

They soon drew near the spot.

The hut was built of turf and stones, in a little gap between two almost perpendicular walls; it was covered with a roof of bark, and so completely concealed by shrubs and ferns that grew in the crevices of the cliffs, that there was very little probability of its being discovered.

It was entered by an opening just large enough to admit a man crawling on his hands and knees, the aperture being concealed by a quantity of underbrush growing before it, while the stones forming the side and-top of the entrance were so artfully laid and covereded with moss, that they seemed to form part of the original rock itself.

Flying Foot first carefully examined the ground about the hut, and having fully satisfied himself that no one had been in the vicinity during his absence, climbed to the top of one of the rocks, and surveyed the country around; then, coming down, he drew the bushes aside, and briefly said:

"Enter."

When all the others were inside, he followed, carefully restoring the bushes to their upright positions again.

For a moment he stood thoughtfully gazing at the ground. Then turning to Little Deadshot, he said:

"Boy, you are tired; go in there and lie down."

There was something in his tone that commanded obedience, and Hal Hunter never for a single moment thought of questioning his authority. Therefore he at once entered the small inner apartment, and throwing himself upon the rude bed of twigs and leaves, was soon buried in slumber.

Flying Foot proceeded to build a fire in a hole that was dug in the ground in the middle of the outer room of the hut, and which was lined up with flat stones.

Soon a quantity of venison was boiling, and in a little while the meat was prepared.

Before they commenced to eat, the host took a look into the inner room, but finding Little Deadshot fast asleep, muttered:

"I'll not wake him, he can eat by-and-by, and on the whole, per-

haps it is better so; yes, much better." Then returning to his companions, he set the food before them, saying: "Eat," at the same time setting them the example.

When their appetites were in a measure appeased, the great Indian slayer touched each of his companions with his knife in order to attract their attention, and then in a low but earnest tone, said:

"You know me, both of you, know me for just what I am; you know my young friend Daniel Boone, back yonder; you know what we have done together in times past, and what we can do again, or, if needs be, what I can do alone."

"Well, I've got word—no matter how—from Boone that he'll meet me some ten days hence on the other side of the Green, and then we propose to make a clean sweep of this country and open it up to the whites. The question is, do you want to go in with us, and have a share in the benefits and glory—you two, and the boy of course."

"I'm willing," said Seth, promptly.

"So am I," said Sol, after an interview of some moments.

"Good!" exclaimed the black pioneer, in a relieved tone, "you shall never regret it, and now draw nearer and listen." Then sinking his voice to a low whisper he continued:

"There is one thing that will require all our energy, one thing—"

The dismal hoot of an owl that seemed to come directly from overhead, interrupted him.

All three instantly started to their feet. Flying Foot, because he knew it was a signal requiring his attention; the others, because, from a long training in the woods, they knew it was no owl that had uttered the dismal sound, and, therefore, that it was best to be on their guard.

"It's all right," said Flying Foot, hastily; "wait for me here," and he quickly disappeared through the opening.

He was absent for the space of ten minutes, and when he returned, those who had only seen him after a victory, or while preparing, or partaking of food with his friends, never would have known the man.

His features were distorted; his eyes were blood-shot; his manner was wild. In short, he seemed no longer a man but a fiend.

He was not alone; a young man of some twenty-five years accompanied him.

"Sit there," he said, addressing the stranger, "and help yourself."

"Eagle Eye, arouse your boy, and see that he eats well. In fifteen minutes we must be on the trail, and to-morrow Indian blood must flow in torrents. Yes, ha-ha, in torrents, or I no longer deserve the name of Flying Foot, the Indian slayer."

Little Deadshot was quickly aroused, and on learning the necessity for haste, began rapidly to store away the tender venison before him.

Soon his appetite was satisfied, and he declared himself ready for the trail.

By this time the others had completed their preparations, and so the whole party started forth.

It was now quite dark, but this seemed to make no difference to Flying Foot. He did not hesitate for a single moment, but moved forward as rapidly as though it had been broad day.

"What's up?" asked Sol, who was close behind him.

"A whole family most horribly murdered, and a beautiful girl carried into captivity. I've been sent for, and from points given me by this young man, know pretty near where they can be found. I'd like to overtake them before daylight."

"How many do they number?"

"Twenty-one."

"Tomahawks an' scalpin' knives! they outnumber us mor'n four to one."

"What of it?" asked Flying Foot, dryly.

"Ah!" exclaimed Seth, "this ere's ther right kind o' an expedition."

"It will be well for us all to keep our mouths shut," said the leader, impatiently. "Leave the trail to me."

They now moved forward in perfect silence, and at such a rate that Little Deadshot found it difficult to keep up. He made no complaint, however, and the others seemed not to think of him.

The night was nearly past. It was that hour just before dawn when the darkness seems most profound, and the slumbers of the sleeping deepest.

Suddenly Flying Foot came to a stand.

"I smell smoke," he whispered; "now have your weapons ready

and move forward with the utmost caution. And," he added, an instant later, "don't fire until I give the word."

In five minutes more they were in sight of the Indian's camp-fire.

All were asleep save only the prisoner and the solitary sentinel.

So profound was the silence that the hard breathing of the sleepers, the crackling of the fire and the murmur of a distant stream, assumed an unwonted loudness.

Stretched on the ground, at some distance from the fire, was a beautiful girl. The savages had bent down a sapling to which they had tied her feet, then they had bent another across her from the opposite side and fastened her hands to that.

She was right between two of her captors, one lying upon one of the saplings and his companion on the other, so that it was utterly impossible for her to move without waking them both.

Stifled sobs arose from her breast, and big tears rolled down her cheeks, that, fettered as she was, hand and foot, she could not wipe away.

The grim sentinel sits before the fire, apparently lost in a deep reverie. All at once he started to his feet, and with parted lips seemed intently listening. Then, without moving from his place, he touched the slumbering savage nearest to him, but before the half wakened redskin could gain his feet, the terrible war-whoop rang out, rifles flashed in quick succession, and he fell back dead.

In an instant the whole camp was in an uproar, and the work of death had commenced in death earnest.

Suddenly a startling cry rang out:

"The prisoner—the prisoner! the fiends are about to tomahawk and scalp her!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BLOODY VICTORY.

It was Little Deadshot who had uttered the warning cry, and no moment too soon had he spoken. Both of the savages who had charge of the prisoner had started up, and being uncertain as to the force of the attacking party, were preparing, tomahawk in hand, to make sure that the young girl did not escape them.

They were not alone incited to this action by native cruelty, for while they might readily be excused if they did not bring forward their prisoner alive when called upon, they would be forever disgraced if they could not produce her scalp.

The boy's words instantly attracted the attention of Flying Foot, and, with a deep imprecation, he sprang forward.

The next moment one of the savages, with his skull crushed in, lay dead at his feet, while a bullet from Little Deadshot's unerring rifle put a period to the other's existence.

Stooping down, Flying Foot, with one stroke of his knife, liberated the girl's hands, and with another, performed the same kind office for her feet.

"Now," he said, in hurried tones, "don't stir—'twould be as much as your life is worth. Just lie perfectly still and trust me. Don't fear that I shall forget—I never forget." Then bitterly, and more to himself than to the girl: "That's why I am here now."

"I will not move, sir," said the girl, in a voice full of confidence and gratitude.

The bloody work was still going on in all its fury, and now that the savages were fully aroused, it was hard to tell which party would come off the victors.

One advantage the attacking party had over the enemy. For the most part they were in deep shadow, while the redskins could be distinguished by the light of the fire.

Thus far five of the savages had been killed and three wounded, while not one of the whites had been injured; but still the odds were strongly against the latter.

This the Indians began to suspect and soon becoming convinced of the fact, their self-confidence was restored.

It soon became evident that the fight was to be a long and stubborn one, and after a moment's consideration, Flying Foot made his arrangements accordingly.

The savages by this time had smothered the fire and taken to

the shelter of the trees; but the first rays of the morning light were just penetrating through the foliage, rendering objects around dimly visible.

"Little Deadshot," said Flying Foot, who was concealed behind a tree in the near vicinity of the lad, "do you see that basswood yonder?"

"Yes."

"And you see that rock off here to the right?"

"No—no!"

"Here—off here."

"Ah, yes—I see now."

"Well, behind that tree is an Indian who *must* die, and that right speedily. I know that you never miss your mark, and now I want you to make your way to some point from whence you can get a shot at him and put the shot home. When I hear the report of your rifle I shall rush in, seize the girl, and make for the shelter of the rock. Now you see how much I rely on your skill. That Indian is watching the girl. He knows that some of us will undertake to rescue her, and the instant we endeavor to do so he will fire. So you see, in what I am now planning, I not only place my own, but the girl's life in your hands."

Little Deadshot was greatly moved by this exhibition of confidence on the part of one around whose life so much of mystery hung, and in earnest words and feeling tones assured him that he would do his best to merit his good opinion.

All about the camp was now as silent as the grave. Each party seemed to be waiting for a movement on the part of the other.

Suddenly and without the slightest sound, Little Deadshot dropped flat upon the ground, and then quickly disappeared in the low and thick undergrowth, dragging his rifle after him.

He wriggled along like a snake, and at length succeeded in getting to a considerable distance without once having attracted the attention of the enemy.

Flying Foot watched all his movements with the most earnest solicitude. Seeing at last that he was far enough away to execute his purpose at his ease, he turned to the others, and in short, earnest sentences gave them his instructions.

Little Deadshot, having reached a certain point, made a half circuit about the enemy's camp, and then began cautiously to approach again.

At length he discovered the Indian behind the basswood, and having taken up a suitable shelter for himself, raised his rifle.

The Indian was of powerful build, and, as was not uncommon in those days, of comely features and symmetrical form; moreover, his dress indicated that he was a chief—a man of influence in the councils of his tribe.

But all this did not deter the boy from his purpose, and yet he lowered his rifle with a strange feeling at his heart.

All that depended upon the certainty of his aim weighed upon him.

At length, by an effort of his will, he gained complete control of himself. This he the more readily did, as he saw the savage apparently making preparations to fire upon either the young girl or one of his friends.

Again he raised his rifle.

At that very instant the Indian straightened himself up, and for an instant turned his face directly toward him.

He seemed about to move or speak.

Crack!

And without stirring from his tracks, he fell forward upon his face, with a bullet through his brain.

As quick as thought a dozen shots were fired at the spot from whence the fatal bullet had come. This was what Flying Foot had expected would happen, and now, without an instant's delay, he darted forward, and seizing the young girl in his arms, rushed toward the shelter of the rock.

With a howl of rage, the savages sprang from the cover of the shelter of the trees and hurled their tomahawks after him. Then Sol and his two companions opened fire, and three of the foremost fell. But now, knowing that the rifles of the whites were as empty as their own, the remaining nine Indians continued to press forward.

Meantime, Little Deadshot had reloaded his rifle, and Flying Foot had deposited his fair burden in a sheltered nook behind the rock.

Both at the same time saw the desperate attack of the nine savages upon their three companions.

With a terrible yell, such as it would hardly seem possible could come from a human throat, Flying Foot rushed toward the combatants.

Crack! went his rifle; then, as one of the redskins fell, he threw the empty weapon from him, and with tomahawk and scalping knife ready, dashed on.

Little Deadshot also fired and brought down his man. By this action he saved Seth Sayle's life, but was not quick enough to save him from all harm. The terrible knife of the dead savage had struck him in the left shoulder and inflicted a painful, though not dangerous, wound.

The young man who had brought the message to Flying Foot was less fortunate. He was set upon by two of the redskins, and before assistance could reach him was hacked to death and his scalp stripped from his head.

But now the terrible Indian slayer was among them like a whirlwind. In the twinkling of an eye he had hewn down a brace of the miscreants, and was tackling another, while Sol cut down a fourth.

At this point they were man for man, only Seth, being in a measure disabled, could not do his full share.

Again Little Deadshot's rifle spoke, and now the fight became more even.

But suddenly the Indians received aid from an unexpected source. One of their wounded, having managed to repossess himself of his rifle, made a target of Flying Foot's head. From weakness or some other cause his aim was not true, and the dread Indian slayer escaped with no greater damage than a bullet hole through his fur cap.

But with the fierceness of an enraged tiger he rushed upon the wounded Indian, and with a single stroke of his tomahawk brained him on the spot. Then cutting the skin almost down to the ears, he tore the scalp from his head; nor did he consider his work done until he had finished the other two and denuded their heads likewise. Then once more he went to the assistance of his friends.

The fight, however, was already over, one of the last three of the savages having been killed, and the others taking to flight.

"Look to the girl, Sol—you and Little Deadshot!" and without another word the Indian slayer, who was now wrought up to a terrible pitch, plunged into the forest on the trail of the fugitives.

Sol Somers' first care was to look at, and then carefully dress the ugly wound in Seth Sayle's shoulder. Having done this, and made his old friend as comfortable as possible, he went to work to dispose of the dead body of their companion.

Thus it was Little Deadshot who administered to the wants of the beautiful girl who had been so nobly rescued from the savages, and while he held a leaf filled with water to her lips, he thought he had never seen any one half so lovely before in all his life.

CHAPTER IX.

LITTLE DEADSHOT TELLS A HORRIBLE STORY.

"Do you feel better now?" asked Little Deadshot, diffidently.

"Oh, yes, thank you! That water was very refreshing," responded the beautiful girl.

"Would you like some more?" asked the boy, eagerly.

"If—if it wouldn't be too much trouble."

"Not the least trouble in the world, I assure you," and he was off like the wind.

Presently he returned with the broad leaf brimming full of limpid fluid, and again held it to her lips.

She drank eagerly, and when she had finished, looked the boy full in the face and said:

"You are very kind. You don't know how much I thank you."

"Oh, miss, I have done nothing to thank me for," he responded, with a blush.

"Yes, you have. What is your name, please?"

"I was called Hal Hunter until about two years or more ago, and a few call me so now—that is, sometimes."

"And what do most people call you now?"

"Little Deadshot."

"That's a terrible name!" exclaimed the young girl, with a shudder. "Yes, that's a terrible name!" she repeated, after a moment's silence. "I like Hal much better."

"You may call me Hal, if you like, but I'm very proud of the other name," said the boy.

"Why?" asked his companion, curiously.

"Because I have no real right to the name of Hal Hunter, that I am aware of, and the other I won for myself," and the boy's face flushed with pardonable pride.

"Then I shall call you by that name!" said the girl, emphatically—"that is, most always. But tell me, why have you no right to the other?"

"It is a very long and a very sad story, miss—"

"My name is Myra Merton—call me Myra, please," said the girl, hastily.

"Well, Myra, 'tis, as I say—a long, sad story, and I will not tell it to you now. I will only say that I know my father was a settler on the frontier of one of the colonies—Pennsylvania, I believe—and I can just remember my beautiful mother and a darling little baby; but whether it was a brother or a sister I cannot recollect, I was so young at the time; and there is another reason, as you will see. I know that there were other children, but I cannot recall much about them, and do not even know whether there were two or more.

"I think I was not far from five years of age at the time, and I am quite sure the others were younger than I.

"Well, my father had gone off to hunt and trap one day, as he often did, not supposing there were any hostile Indians within twenty-five miles, and it seems to me he had not been gone more than an hour when the terrible war whoop of the Indians rang out, and in a moment our cabin was surrounded.

"What followed was simply horrible. I can see it all now," said the boy, in a sad, dreamy tone, as he placed his hand over his eyes—"see it as I have often seen it since in my dreams. Yes, it was horrible!"

"Don't tell any more, please, if it makes you feel bad," said Myra, in a tearful voice.

"Yes—yes, I will just finish what I was going to say," returned Little Deadshot, hastily, and then he went on:

"The savages dashed into the cabin, both by the front and rear, and in a moment my mother—my young and beautiful mother—she could not have been more than twenty-three or four, Myra—was dead at my feet, and one of them, twisting his hand into her glorious hair, tore the scalp from her head right before my eyes."

The young girl groaned.

"Then one of the miscreants," continued the boy, "grasped the baby by its little ankles and dashed its brains out against the door post, while at the same time another of the Indians served one of the other children in the same way."

Here he was interrupted by a sob.

"My story pains you," he said, hurriedly. "I will say no more."

"Go on—oh, go on!" she cried. "You are telling my own experience right over again. It is well for me to know that others have suffered what I have suffered."

"Then," continued Hal, "little as I was, I became furious, and snatching up a hatchet that mother had used in splitting kindlings, I sprang forward, and with one blow cut off a part of the right foot of the murdering villain who had killed and scalped my mother.

The wounded savage was frantic with pain and rage, and did his utmost to get at and kill me; but the chief who led the band had seen the act, and at once took me under his protection, resolving, as I afterwards learned, to adopt me as his own.

"There were two among his followers greatly opposed to this. These were the Indian I had wounded and a repulsive looking white man, who seemed in a measure to have directed the attack.

"But the chief was not to be deterred from his purpose, and, of course, at last had his own way. Then the wounded Indian was cared for, the cabin and outbuildings burned, and the retreat commenced.

"They divided into two parties after a while, each taking different trails, and I have never seen nor heard of my father from that day to this. I believe, if he followed us at all, which I cannot doubt he did, he must have taken the wrong trail.

"The second day after the massacre, as I was trudging along by

the side of the chief, I suddenly felt as though my skull was being crushed in, and then I knew no more for several days—how many I have no idea.

"When I returned to consciousness we were in a warmer climate, and I was strapped to the back of a stout Indian, who was conveying me through the forest.

"The party was even smaller than when I fell by the side of the chief, and I saw that neither the Indian I had wounded nor the white wretch who had been so active in the destruction of my family were among them.

"I tried to think of all that had happened, but found I could recall very little, and, alas! I have never been able to bring back to my mind much of my early life since."

"What was it that happened to you when you became unconscious?" asked Myra, who was intensely interested in Little Deadshot's story.

"Either the white villain or the Indian I had wounded threw his tomahawk at me. See, here's the mark," and the boy, taking off his fur cap, parted the hair on the back of his head and exhibited an ugly scar.

Myra shuddered as she gazed.

"You came very near to death then, Little Deadshot," she said.

"Yes, indeed," was the reply, "and I can hardly imagine how I escaped; but the Indians really possess wonderful skill in the treatment of wounds, and I am sure the chief had taken a fancy to me and saw that I had the best of care."

"Was he with you at the time you came to yourself?"

"No, and I have never seen him since—that is, not to my knowledge."

"How was that?"

"The next day, as we were passing through a dense piece of woods and about to ascend a slight elevation, we seemed suddenly to be attacked on all sides by white men.

"I remember very little about it, but I know that not one of the savages escaped, for old Tom, Sol Somers and Seth Sayle have told me so a hundred times.

"You see it was a party of trappers that had attacked the redmen and rescued me, and one of these, Tom Hunter, gave me his name, as I could not recollect my own, and called me Hal, after his only son, who had been killed by the savages some years before.

"But although old Tom treated me as though I really was his son, and I lived mostly with him, yet Sol Somers felt a great interest in me, as did also Seth and all the other scouts and trappers of the regions, and when at last Tom died I commenced a regular forest life with Sol, we two being often in the company of the others.

"Thus you see most of my life has been passed in the woods, along with trappers and backwoodsmen, and yet my education has not been wholly neglected. During the winters of the past two or three years a strange sort of person—a recluse who lately came among us—has given me the benefit of his superior knowledge; so I am not altogether unlearned.

"This, Myra, is my story down to the present time, and I fear I have made it too long, and thus have wearied you."

"Oh, no, you have not!" returned the girl. "I have been greatly interested. Alas! in many points, as I told you before, your story is so much like mine!"

For some time Myra now sat gazing thoughtfully at the ground, while Little Deadshot stood near, silently regarding her. Suddenly she looked up.

"How old are you, Hal?" she asked.

"I believe I am about fourteen," he said. "I am sure I am older than that."

"Why, that is just my age. How strange! But then, Little Deadshot, you are smart enough to be sixteen—yes, to be a full-grown man!"

"And I am sure, Myra, that you look quite sixteen. Nobody would take you for less, I—"

"Hark! What's that?"

Little Deadshot instantly started to his feet and seized his fatal rifle.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE EDGE OF THE PRECIPICE.

"AH! it's Flying Foot!" exclaimed Little Deadshot, in a tone of relief.

Then, as the somber Indian slayer joined them:

"Did you succeed in overtaking the two savages?"

"Certainly," was the reply, "or I should not be here now. But come, we've not a moment to lose. Let us get away from here at once!" and for the first time Little Deadshot noticed a troubled look on the other's face.

"Is there further danger? Are there more Indians about?" he asked, hastily.

"Hosts of them," was the response. "But hurry, and ask no more questions."

Preparations for the departure were now hastened, but Little Deadshot took notice that Flying Foot did not leave the late battle ground until every scalp of the slain was dangling at his belt.

The little party now began to retreat through the forest in Indian file, Flying Foot, as before, taking the lead, but Sol instead of Seth bringing up the rear.

Little Deadshot walked directly in front of Myra, and was of the greatest service to her.

In this way they proceeded for some miles, until they struck the dry bed of an ancient stream.

Then Flying Foot, as though a sudden thought had struck him, came back to where Myra was standing, and after regarding her in silence for a moment, he said:

"Sit down on the bank and let me look at your feet."

The girl sat down and permitted him to take her feet in his lap.

"I thought so," he said, after stripping off her shoes and examining her swollen feet. "Now let me put these on," and taking a pair of moccasins from the pocket of his frock, fitted one on each foot, and placed the discarded shoes in the same receptacle.

"You will now be able to walk easier," he said, "and at the same time, what we have just done may help to confuse the Indians."

They followed the bed of the ancient stream for more than a mile; then leaving it, they struck off in a due westerly direction.

In a short time they came in sight of a noble river, and as they approached it, became aware that an enemy was at no great distance in their rear.

Flying Foot looked back anxiously.

He saw signs of distress on the face of the noble girl.

"Can you—do you believe you can keep up a little longer, only for five minutes?" he asked.

"I will try," was the answer.

"Then let us hurry."

For three minutes Myra kept up, and then she fell.

Flying Foot looked around in consternation.

"No—no, it was no Injun arrow," said Sol, in answer to his look; "she's jist gin out, that's all," and seizing her in his arms, he pressed forward as though she was no more than a feather weight.

Suddenly they were on the bank of the broad river, and right before them was what at first appeared to be a high and rocky island, but which Little Deadshot almost immediately saw was connected with the main land by a narrow isthmus of sand.

"Now, over with you, quick!" cried Flying Foot, "and pass to the right. When you get beyond that jutting rock, you'll see a steep path that leads up toward the top. Take it and ascend; I'll cover your retreat. Sol, you go first."

Eagle Eye stalked hastily forward with his lovely burden. Seth went next, and then Little Deadshot. Flying Foot brought up the rear, looking behind him at every step as he advanced.

On reaching the island, for so we may call it, he again turned. At that instant there was a flash from the woods they had just left, and a bullet struck the rock close by Sol's head.

Before the report had died away there was an answering shot from the Indian slayer's rifle. This was followed by a yell of mortal agony, and a redskin was seen to fall just without the line of the forest.

Then such a war-whoop rang out as few there had ever heard before, and more than twenty shots were fired at the somber marksman.

"Up the rock—up the rock!" he cried, pressing close behind the others, who now hurried with all speed.

A moment later they were out of range of the enemy's rifles, and were rapidly ascending the side of the rock.

When they had nearly reached the top, Flying Foot drew some brush aside, and disclosed a cavern's mouth.

"Put the young girl in there," he said, "then follow me to the top."

"Why should I not go with you?" asked Myra, who was now almost herself again.

"Because it would be dangerous, and you would be a hindrance rather than a help to us," said Flying Foot, hurriedly.

"I will do as you wish."

And the young girl walked boldly into the cavern.

"Who comes thar?" demanded a deep bass voice.

Myra gave a cry of fright, and rushed toward the entrance again.

"Ah, this is fortunate!" said the Indian killer. "That's you, Catamount, ain't it?"

"Yer jist bet it is, Flying Foot! What kin I do fer yer?"

"Give that young girl your bed, and come out here."

Myra, who quickly recovered from her fright, accepted the bed of leaves vacated by the young man, and threw herself upon it. In another moment the strange being called Catamount stood before Flying Foot and his astonished companions.

His speech would seem to indicate that he was a white man, and either American or English; but aside from that, it would have been hard to tell what he was, for his skin was so tanned and dirty, it looked more like the color of mud than anything else. Then he affected the Indian style of dress, even to shaving his head and leaving the scalp lock, which he claimed to do as a challenge to the savages.

As this queer being presented himself, Flying Foot exclaimed:

"We are beset by the redskins, and your assistance will be of the greatest service to us."

"Yes—yes, I understand," he responded. "I smell ther critters; they're clus onto yer already."

"Let one go to ther pine, an' keep eny more o' ther varmints from comin' over, an' we'll go up a-top an' see what's to be did."

"Little Deadshot," said Flying Foot, hurriedly, "you see that pine?"

"Yes."

"Well, there's a clump of underbrush about its base; get into it some way, and don't let another Indian cross from the main land."

The boy was off like a shot.

"And now for the top of the rock!" cried the Indian slayer, leading the way.

The others followed close behind.

As the summit came into view, they beheld no less than nine Indians advancing from the other side.

Quickly four rifles rang out, and four savages fell. Then, as the whites received the fire of the remaining five, they rushed forward to a hand-to-hand conflict, Flying Foot alone having been hit, and he not seriously.

Soon all were engaged in a mortal struggle, on a spot not thirty feet square, and overhanging on one side the rushing, foaming river more than sixty feet below.

The Catamount defended himself against two, Sol and Seth, one each, and Flying Foot was locked tight in the embrace of a powerful warrior of vastly superior strength.

Nearer and nearer the savage dragged the somber Indian slayer to the brink of the precipice; at last they were on the very edge. Then, with the malignant smile of a fiend, he raised him in his arms to hurl him into the awful gulf below.

CHAPTER XI.

MYRA'S BRAVE ACT—A PRECARIOUS SITUATION.

THE terrible tragedy that was being enacted on the summit of the river washed rock was not without spectators.

From the border of the gloomy forest, which, as the reader will remember, came down almost to the water's edge, many a painted face peered out, with eyes intently fixed on the fierce combatants, struggling for victory and for life.

At first they had endeavored to reinforce their friends by crossing the narrow neck of sand which connected the island-like rock with the main land; but Little Deadshot's unerring rifle soon put a stop to all, and forced them back.

No less than three did he kill before they had made more than half the distance across, and each one received the fatal bullet between the eyes!

Indians have a wholesome dread of such marksmanship as this, and soon learn to keep their distance; so it was now only from the cover of the trees that they watched the dreadful struggle between their friends and the palefaces.

At length all interest centered in the battle between the powerful brave and Flying Foot.

They knew the somber Indian killer well, ay, and they would gladly have given any ten scalps they had ever taken for the hair that grew on his head.

With frantic yells of joy they at last beheld him, who never before had been for a single instant in the power of an Indian, helpless in the arms of his antagonist.

The next moment they saw him lifted from his feet, and waited with bated breath to see him hurled into space.

But all at once their exultant shouts were changed into howls of rage and disappointment.

What had caused this sudden change?

Just as the almost naked savage was about to hurl his enemy from him, a young girl, with streaming hair and dilating eyes, firmly clutching a keen-edged knife in her hand, darted forward from some hidden place.

Not for a single instant did she hesitate, but like lightning she drew the blade across the back of the Indian's hands—first one and then the other, cutting through to the bones.

With a groan of agony, the redskin dropped his foe from his now impotent grasp.

Quick as thought Flying Foot snatched the knife, and with one quick movement of his hand and wrist, drew a circle around the still living redskin's head; then, as with one hand he tore the scalp from the skull, with the other he thrust him forth over the precipice.

One plunge and all was over; the savage had cleared the waters to meet his death on the sharp and cruel rocks below.

"Oh, sir, that was horrible—horrible!" exclaimed Myra, for it was indeed she who had saved the scout's life. "Why—why did you not kill him first if you must take his scalp?"

"What! Kill? Didn't I kill him—didn't I kill him? Wasn't he dead, say?"

And the strange being glared at her wildly.

"No doubt he is dead now," said Myra, starting back, with a feeling akin to fear; "but he was not when you tortured him so."

"Tortured him! ha-ha-ha! Torture an Indian! Listen. If I could make each and everyone of them bear all the agonies ever inflicted by the Spanish Inquisition, it would not be half—nor, no nor even a quarter what I would like to make them suffer. Did they spare me?"

"What! and have you too suffered at their hands?" cried the girl, in astonishment.

"Question me not now."

And the somber being looked both dark and repelling.

Meantime, the Catamount had disposed of one of his antagonists, and was engaged with the other. Sol was gaining the mastery of his, but Seth, owing to his wound, was having some difficulty.

Seeing the situation, Flying Foot, with compressed lips, rushed forward.

A warning cry from the shore caused Seth's foe to turn, and with a yell of rage, he made a lunge at the heart of his new adversary; then it was that Seth, with well directed blow, plunged his knife into the back of the Indian's neck. The next instant he was dead at his feet.

Only two of the nine savages remained undisposed of, and they were not destined to tarry long after their companions in starting on the journey toward the happy hunting ground.

Sol had grown impatient at the stubborn resistance made by his opponent, and at length rushing in, without due precaution, received an ugly cut in the head, which, although it did not disable him, certainly gave him a very sanguinary appearance. But after all, it served a good purpose, for it inflamed his rage, and before the Indian could recover his guard, his knife had drank his life blood.

A moment later the Catamount had finished his antagonist, and with all the coolness with which he would have taken the pelt from a fur bearing animal, he now stripped the scalp from his head.

Up to this time the Indians on shore had been deterred from firing at any one of their enemies, for while the combat was going on they were fearful that they might hit their own friends; but now that the last of these had fallen they set up a terrible howl of rage and anger, and discharged a perfect volley at the victorious trappers.

With a look of great anxiety, Flying Foot turned to where the girl was standing.

"Are you hurt, child?" he asked.

"No, oh, no, please don't fret about me," she said, "but yourself—Little Deadshot?"

"We are all safe this time, but you go down, down at once, before they fire again. It would be out of reason to suppose all could escape another such volley as that."

"But you won't let them get to the island again?"

"No—no, go down to the cavern at once, I say."

The girl obeyed, and the stern whites now sought such slight shelter as the place afforded, and began jealously to watch for signs of the hidden foe in the forest.

Presently they saw the barrel of a rifle protrude itself from the cover of the trees, and then the face of an Indian, as he was in the act of taking aim at one of their number more exposed than the others.

Flying Foot quickly raised his rifle to fire, but before he could get it to his shoulder, another rang out, and immediately the brave pitched forward, falling flat upon his face—dead.

Instantly an angry growl went up from the woods.

"Good for Little Deadshot!" cried Sol, exultingly. "He does it every time."

Just then the Indians undertook to draw in the body of their slain companion, and with a grim smile of satisfaction, Flying Foot sent a messenger of death among them.

Another fell, and another yell arose, then all became still as the grave.

Five—ten—fifteen minutes passed. It was beginning to be weary waiting for the next move in the game, when Eagle Eye suddenly uttered a low hissing sound to attract the attention of his companions.

Having succeeded in this, he pointed toward the spot where the two dead bodies had lain.

They looked and saw that they were slowly gliding from sight into the cover of the forest.

"Hum!" muttered Seth, "it's mighty queer how much pains ther critters'll take ter keep ther har on ther heads o' ther defunct braves. Waal—waal, let 'em save it ef they kin; thar's two less on 'em enny way."

Flying Foot gave a grunt of dissatisfaction.

"Indian cunning may hide those bodies," he said, "but white man's cunning shall find them, and at least one of those scalps shall yet hang to this belt of blood."

The words were uttered in such a strange and terrible tone, that they caused even Seth Sayle to shudder.

Just then Little Deadshot's rifle again rang out, and once more the terrible shout arose from the woods, then all again became as silent as death.

Minutes now lengthened into hours, and not a sign of a savage was to be seen or heard in any direction.

At length Flying Foot sent food to Little Deadshot, with a message to keep up the same faithful watch for a time, and then he called a council of war.

"Well, Catamount," he asked, "what's your opinion of the situation?"

"My 'pinion," responded the Catamount, in a serious tone, "is that the pesky varmints are a hatchin' some new deviltry that ye'll hear on afore yer many hours older. Ther sitowation, ter say ther least, ain't no ways pleasant ter think on, nohow."

"What would you advise?"

"Gin me a little time afore I answer, Flying Foot. Gin me a little time."

And the Catamount bowed his head on his breast and thought.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CATAmount'S EXPEDITION—AN OBSTACLE IN THE PATH.

PATIENTLY Flying Foot waited for the Catamount to speak. At length he raised his head.

"Tain't no ways likely we'll git o' this yere rock ter-night," he said, "an' I'm a thinkin' ther pesky critters'li be comin' down onter us in some sly way o' their own arter dark. Now it don't stand ter reason, 'cause they're still, they ain't doin' nothin'. My 'sperience tells me that when an Injun makes ther least noise he's up ter ther most devilment."

Flying Foot here made a gesture of assent.

"Waal, then," continued the Catamount, "it becomes us, as white men, ter set our wits ter work ter sarcumvent the sarcumventers. An', in order ter do that, we orter know what they're about at this, ere blessed minute."

At these last words all three of his listeners looked up with eager interest.

"Ay; but how can we do it?" asked Seth. "A man would be riddled with bullets afore he could get half way cross to the narrow stretch o' sand."

The Catamount, for answer, pointed, in a significant manner, to the water that lay in the opposite direction.

"Ah, it might be done," said Flying Foot, in a musiug tone.

"I kin do it," said the Catamount. "An' what's more ter ther purpose, I will."

"Zuckers!" exclaimed Sol, starting op and grasping him by the hand, "yer a trump, Catamount."

"Thankee, Eagle Eye, an' I believe I may say as much for you."

"You think it's best to undertake this dangerous expedition at once?" asked Flying Foot.

"Yes; an' at ther same time the varmints mustn't suspect that one o' us has left this 'ere rock, mind that."

"How will you accomplish this feat?"

"Watch, an' you'll see."

And without further words this singular creature handed his rifle to Flying Foot.

He then divested himself of his powder-horn and bullet-pouch, and after fastening his tomahawk and knife in his belt, so that there would be no danger of losing them during the passage, he threw himself flat upon the ground.

Slowly he moved toward the side of the rock opposite that which faced the woods where the Indians were supposed to be concealed.

Having reached the edge, he slipped over it, and lowered himself by means of roots and climbing vines, until he had nearly reached the surface of the river, when, plunging in, he wholly disappeared from view.

Anxiously those left on the rock waited and watched for some signs of his reappearance, but they saw none, and as the moments lengthened out, they were forced to content themselves with the thought that he was too good a swimmer to have perished in the water, and that they might yet see him again when they least expected it.

But while they are waiting and watching, it is our privilege to follow this really strange and mysterious creature of the forest.

When he had permitted the waters to close over his head, he only exerted himself to keep under, so that no portion of his body might be exposed to view, and thus allowed himself to be carried down by the current for at least a quarter of a mile.

Having rounded a bend in the river, he felt that it would be safe to look about him, and coming to the surface, he found that the rock and all its surroundings were now hidden from view.

Quickly he came in shore, and having landed, hastened into the cover of the bushes which lined the bank.

He soon satisfied himself that none of the redskins had been so far down the river; so, while in no wise reckless, he started, with a feeling of perfect confidence and security, toward the point where the Indians had been concealed.

At length he reached the neighborhood of the spot. Then he began to practice the utmost precaution.

Presently he was in a position from which he could see the very place where they had found shelter.

At first he felt certain that all had disappeared, but suddenly he

beheld a solitary sentinel, with eyes fixed on the spot where he knew Little Deadshot to be concealed.

Before he took another step forward he looked still more closely about him. At last he discovered, at some little distance from where the sentinel was standing, two more savages stretched at full length upon the ground, with their heads wrapped in their blankets.

Then he loosened his tomahawk in his belt, and clutched his knife firmly in his hand.

Now a piece of skill and cunning was enacted, hard to comprehend or believe possible.

With consummate adroitness the Catamount glided from tree to tree, not touching a single twig on the ground, nor rustling a single dry leaf. At length he was concealed behind the tree next back of the one which sheltered the Indian sentinel, and not more than ten feet from him, yet he had not for one single instant attracted his attention.

Here he remained perfectly motionless for at least a minute; then, with tomahawk upraised, he dashed forward.

The Indian, hearing a slight noise behind him, turned, but too late to avoid the descending blow, which, like lightning, cleaved him to the very brain.

It required hardly a moment to secure his scalp; then, throwing himself upon the ground, he glided like a serpent toward the two muffled sleepers.

He reached them, and bending over the nearest, buried his knife in his heart. Then he started for the other.

Just as his knife was about to descend, the savage, casting off his blanket, slipped from his grasp like an eel.

The next instant he was upon his feet and darting to cover.

The Catamount started up with a bound. For one moment he poised his tomahawk aloft, then threw it from him.

His aim had been perfect; the terrible weapon struck the fleeing Indian in the back of the head, burying itself almost to the haft in his skull.

With a cunning worthy of the savages themselves, he now went to work to dispose of the bodies, thrusting them, one after the other, deep into the cavity of a hollow tree, and then obliterating all signs of blood, and, as far as possible, his own footprints.

Having done all this, he began to hunt for the trail of the others.

Quickly he found it, for they had taken no pains whatever to conceal their tracks.

Now, with wary steps and cautious eyes, he followed the marks up the river. For almost a third of a mile it led him. At length, on the banks of a creek which emptied into the larger stream, he found what he sought, the whole band of Indians, being no less than twenty-seven in number.

They were all busy, and it hardly required a second glance to inform him what it was that occupied their attention.

They already had one birch bark canoe, which was floating on the water, and were at work constructing some four or five rafts.

"Ah-ah-ah!" muttered the Catamount, inwardly. "I see it all now. They propose to wait until night comes, then float down with ther current, an' while we are watchin' ther little neck o' sand, they'll land on t'other side o' ther rock, an' cut all our throats. Waal—waal, p'raps they'll do it all, but I reckon as how I shall have a word or so to say on the subject, anyhow."

For some time the Catamount stood intently regarding the redskins, as they lashed the logs together and prepared to launch their extemporized crafts upon the waters of the creek.

"Now ther question is," he muttered, "how to sarcumvent ther critters. A white man's cunnin' orter be equal to a redskin's, but thar's no denyin' an Injun's a cunnin' cuss, ennyhow, an' it takes a power o' thinkin' ter git ahead on him."

"Ef we had that thar canoe I don't make no kind o' doubt but we could get away from 'em, 'specially as I've started them thar spies onter ther long journey toward ther happy huntin' ground, an' I dunno but Flyin' Foot'll think we'd better make ther 'tempt ter dig out as 'tis. Waal, I've seen all I kin fur, so I'll just go back an' report," and noiselessly he returned to retrace his steps.

He started on finding himself confronted by a powerful savage, who stood directly in his path.

"Ugh!" observed the brave, in a very matter-of-fact sort of a way, "my white brother has come so near, surely it will not be well for him to go away without first resting himself among my people."

"I reckon, Tsaraghee," exclaimed the Catamount, repressing all signs of his great vexation and disappointment, "I'll reckon as how you've got ther best o' me this time, for sartin sure."

CHAPTER XIII.

TAKEN PRISONER—THE ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE.

THE Tsaraghee warrior, who, indeed, was the chief of the little band of the creek, did not deign to answer the Catamount, but with an authoritative wave of the hand, indicated that he was to precede him to the camp.

For one brief moment the discomfited trapper hesitated, and from force of habit his hand sought his belt; but instantly the redskin raised his tomahawk in a threatening manner, while with his left hand he pointed sternly and significantly to the busy group of Indians close by.

The Catamount fully comprehended all that the other would imply, and so, with as good a grace as possible, he walked directly into the enemy's camp, closely followed by his captor.

A few involuntary exclamations broke from the younger men of the band on beholding among them one so well-known to be their bitter foe; but these were quickly suppressed, and he was permitted to seat himself on the trunk of a fallen tree without further notice.

His captor now called several of the chief men aside, while at the same time, by significant signs, he directed the others to keep a jealous watch over the prisoner.

The consultation was long and earnest. When it closed, two of those who had taken part in it girded up their loins, looking carefully to their weapons, and then disappeared in the forest, taking the direction from whence the Catamount had come.

Nearly an hour passed, and during all this time not a word was spoken to the prisoner, who still remained seated on the trunk of the fallen tree.

But though he was left alone, all seeming most anxious to avoid him, yet he well knew that he was most carefully watched, and that, too, by many untiring eyes.

At length the two Indians, who had gone out an hour before, returned. Not a word did they speak, but proceeding to the spot where the chief, Catamount's captor, was seated, silently placed themselves by his side.

Soon one after the other of those who had taken part in the previous council came forward, and seated themselves about the trio.

Then, at a sign from the chief, the two scouts began to make their report, those about listening in respectful silence.

The substance of what they had to say was that the three sentinels left to watch the movements of Flying Foot and those with him on the rock had disappeared, and that no traces of them could be found.

In several places they had discovered slight indications of blood, but this really proved nothing, as it might have been that shed by those slain earlier in the day.

"Had they not been killed and thrown into the river?" was a question asked by the chief.

About the killing they could not say, but they had not been thrown into the river, that was certain. There was no trail in that direction. In fact, there was no trail either leading to or from the river at all, at least not in the direction of the island.

Ah! Then from whence had come the terrible Catamount?

He had come from the water, but a long way below the island. They had, after some trouble, found the point where he landed, and from thence his trail led to within a short distance of the spot where the sentinels had been posted. Here all became confused, but at length they had discovered his tracks again, which led directly to their present camp.

"Were the other palefaces yet on the island?"

"Yes, evidently expecting the return of the Catamount."

"Ugh! we shall see," muttered the chief, and now a long silence fell upon the little council.

Each was communing with his own thoughts.

Suddenly Takatoka, the chief, started up, and proceeding directly

to the trunk upon which his prisoner was seated, placed himself by his side.

Of course, the Catamount had been at no loss to fully comprehend the meaning of the first "talk," the sending forth of the scouts, their return, and the second consultation; therefore, he quite well understood the motives for the chief's present visit.

For some time, as is always customary with the Indians under like circumstances, neither spoke.

At last, turning toward his prisoner, the chief, in an almost insinuating voice, said:

"My white brother has not been idle to-day?"

"Yer may swear ter that, redskin; yer howlin' imps kept us poooty middlin' busy on that thar rock below," was the somewhat evasive reply.

"But since then my brother has not slept; he has wandered far in the woods; he has not folded his arms."

"No, no, redskin, that thar ain't no habit o' mine; I've been er lookin' about me some considerable."

"You have seen those whom we left behind us down the river?"

"Ah! now yer comin' tew ther pint, ye subtle serpent," muttered the Catamount, to himself. Then aloud:

"Waal, chief, I won't say as how it's wholly onlikely."

"Can my cunning paleface brother tell me what has become of them? We have sought far, and we do not find their trail; we have called loud, and they do not answer."

"Mayhaps yer didn't look cluss enough, chief, an' it's mor'n likely yer didn't call loud enough."

The Catamount's eyes twinkled with satisfaction as he offered these suggestions.

"It may be so," said the other, slowly. "Then you cannot tell me where to look for them?"

As Takatoka asked the question, his eyes became riveted on the hideous emblems dangling from the Catamount's belt.

"No, chief, I've no call to tell yer nuthin'."

"My paleface brother is a great warrior; he has taken many scalps. Some of those now at his belt are fresh from the heads of his victims, and those victims were from among my people."

"Waal, chief, yer ain't far out thar, I reckon; but yer hain't forgotten, I s'pose, that a parcel o' yer bloodthirsty cut-throats kim over tew ther island to-day, an' didn't go away agin."

"No, I have not forgotten," retorted the chief, and there was a dangerous gleam in his eyes.

For sometime the Catamount had been stealthily looking about him, and now, for the first time, he thought he saw a slight—a very slight—chance to escape.

A clear path to the canoe was suddenly opened. The birch-bark, as we have already said, was floating on the waters of the creek, the Indians, who were still working on the rafts, being at some little distance above.

The Catamount's plans were formed in an instant, and almost as quickly put in train of execution.

Quick as thought he struck the chief from the log, and then, with a tremendous bound, started for the canoe.

A frightful yell of rage and surprise burst in the air, and then the whole horde of red demons was after him.

He reached the bank.

He gave the canoe a powerful impetus toward the center of the stream, and then sprang into it.

A terrible disappointment awaited him.

There was no paddle—not even a stick aboard.

But the canoe had already reached the middle of the stream, and was rapidly drifting toward the river.

Suddenly, more than a dozen shots were fired, and with a cry of mortal agony the Catamount dropped into the bottom of the canoe, which still continued to float down with the current.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CATAMOUNT'S ESCAPE—NEWS FROM WONSATASATE AND THE RENEGADE.

The Indians sent up a tremendous yell of triumph as the Catamount fell into the bottom of the canoe, and more than half a score

of the young men started off down the right bank of the creek, in order to head off and intercept the drifting craft before it should be carried out into the great river.

It was not alone that they were anxious to make sure of their enemy's death, but they wished also to secure his scalp, as well as to save a rifle that had been left in the bottom of the canoe; more than all this, they wished to prevent the loss of the canoe itself, which, in view of their contemplated attack on Flying Foot's position, was of the greatest consequence to them.

As they hurried along, every eye was kept riveted on the little birch-bark craft, yet not a single movement could be detected on the part of the paleface occupant.

Faster and faster it drifted on, and, at length, was rounding a projecting point beyond which was the opening into the broad river.

But this point the dusky savages had already reached, and, as the canoe drew near to the land, several of them dashed into the water and attempted to seize it by the prow.

All at once there was a slight movement in the boat, then a sudden flash, followed by a ringing report, and the foremost of the savages, with a yell of mortal agony, fairly leaped out of the water, then, falling over on his back, was instantly whirled away toward the river by the resistless current.

The others, on seeing the fate of their companion, involuntarily drew back for a moment, when, like a flash, the canoe rounded the point and was carried beyond their reach.

With howls of rage and disappointment they immediately returned to the shore, and rushing toward a point projecting into the river itself, prepared to stop the progress of the canoe when it should approach the vicinity.

Soon it drew near. In a moment all the Indians were in the water and making toward the track of the drifting bark.

Suddenly the Catamount started to his feet, and taking aim at the nearest of his enemies, lodged a bullet in his brain.

His victim sank in the water, and then again arising to the surface, drifted rapidly away.

The others, with a wild yell of rage, pressed forward. In another moment they were clinging to the sides of the canoe, and the daring Catamount was almost in their grasp.

He still held in his hands the smoking rifle, which, to his great joy and surprise, he had found under a deer-skin in the bottom of the canoe.

Quickly clutching his weapon, he struck one of the Indians over the head with it, crushing in his skull as though it had been no more than an egg shell.

Again he raised it high in the air, but before he could strike another blow, his arms were tightly pinioned from behind.

He struggled desperately to free himself, and all at once losing his balance, fell into the river, carrying his foe with him.

And now a terrible contest ensued, the Indian striving to drown the paleface, and the Catamount to free himself from his terrible grasp.

The others watched the fearful struggle with intense excitement. They had secured the canoe and several of them had entered it, but having no paddles they could not control its motions.

At length the two combatants disappeared beneath the surface of the water.

The Indians watched with breathless interest for the reappearance of their friend, never for a moment doubting he would prove the victor in the deadly struggle.

At last he slowly arose to the surface. But he sent up no glad shout of victory; on the contrary, his voice was hushed, and he lay perfectly motionless on the water, save only as his limbs were disturbed by the rapidly moving current.

Somewhat awed, those of the savages who had not entered the canoe swam toward the Catamount's fate adversary.

No sooner had they drawn near than they discovered a terrible gash in his naked left breast, from which the life blood was freely flowing, and they quickly saw that not only his scalping-knife but his scalp itself was gone.

Then such a death-cry went up as quickly brought to the spot many of the Indians from the camp, including Takatoka himself.

On learning how completely the Catamount had outwitted them, his rage knew no bounds.

"What?" he exclaimed, gnashing his teeth angrily, "he has sent ~~to~~ of my young men to the happy hunting-ground, and is not him-

self on the road to be their servant and the bearer of their burdens. How is this? Are ye no longer warriors? Have ye all turned women? But I will yet have a terrible revenge. He shall not escape me. While he yet lives his scalp shall be stripped from his head, piece by piece, and then he shall be burned at the stake. I have spoken."

The young men were abashed, and having drawn the canoe ashore, fell back without uttering a single word.

Takatoka was now left standing alone for some moments. At length one of the other chief men of the tribe approached him, and said:

"It is plain, the paleface Catamount is as a fish, he can swim at the bottom of the river. He will reach his friends on the rocky island and make known to them all our plans. Then, even if they do not take to flight at once, they will be prepared to resist our attack to-night."

"Cheecaqua speaks the words of wisdom," said the chief. "Let six of my young men set out at once and watch the pass from the island. We will make the attack as soon as we are ready. If we do not succeed, to-morrow we shall be prepared to take some other course, for we shall have Wonsatasate and a part of Oganasdoda's tribe with us."

"How do you know that?" demanded Cheecaqua, in great surprise.

"A runner has just come in with the news," responded the chief. "He says the chief, Wonsatasate, with his friend, the white Indian, whom they call Red Wolf, are on the trail of Eagle Eye and the boy called Little Deadshot, and that they have sworn to wear their scalps at their belts."

"Ugh! it is well; let us go on with our preparations."

The six young men were sent off in hot haste to guard the pass from the island, and the preparations for the night attack were continued with undiminished ardor.

CHAPTER XV.

LITTLE DEADSHOT UNDERTAKES A DANGEROUS TASK.

THE Catamount, after wresting the knife from the hand of his adversary, and plunging it into his heart, lost no time in securing his scalp; then, allowing the lifeless body to arise to the surface, he came up on the further side of it, barely permitting his mouth and nostrils to appear above the water, and having taken in a full breath, again plunged far beneath the surface, and swam rapidly down stream.

When he was quite sure that he was beyond the reach of his enemies, he again arose for fresh air, and to make certain of his surroundings.

Soon after the rocky island appeared before him, and a little later he landed on its shores.

Flying Foot hastened to meet him.

"You have been gone much longer than I expected," he said. "Have you had a brush with the miscreants?"

The Catamount pointed grimly to the seven new scalps dangling from his belt.

"I should jist say I had met 'em, an' that ter some purpose," he replied.

"Ah—ah! that is well!" exclaimed the Indian Slayer, approvingly. "Come to the top of the rock, and let us hear all you have to tell."

The Catamount followed his somber friend to the flat summit of the rocky island.

Soon they were joined by Eagle Eye and Seth Sayle, and a little later Myra Merton and Little Deadshot made their appearance.

In his own quaint language the Catamount related all that he had seen and heard, as well as all that had happened to himself, from the time he had left the island until he had landed on its shores again.

A long silence followed his last words. All saw the gravity of their position, and while there was not a coward or a faint-hearted man in the little group, none cared to underrate the dangers that surrounded them.

Suddenly Little Deadshot started up.

"Catamount!" he exclaimed, eagerly, "didn't you say you'd kill all the spies they left to watch our movements over yonder?"

"Yes," was the reply, "an' ef I'm not greatly mistaken they're stowed away in the trunk o' a hollow tree, as snug as bugs in a rug at this 'ere blessed time."

"Then why can't we quit this spot at once, and so give the pesky rascals the slip before they get ready to attack us."

"There's some reason in that," said Flying Foot, in a musing tone. "It may be they haven't sent up a new batch of spies yet."

"I'm more o' ther opinion they have," said Eagle Eye, emphatically. "Yer kin jist be pooty sure that when they found out ther Catamount had gin 'em ther slip, they didn't forget us."

"I reckon as how Sol's right," said Seth Sayle, approvingly.

"The chances are that way, I'll admit," said Flying Foot; "still, there's a possibility that the path is clear, and yet we mustn't venture to cross over to the main land with this delicate little lady without being certain that we shall not meet an enemy."

"And there's no time to waste in the matter, I take it," said Little Deadshot.

"You're quite right, boy, there's no time to waste."

"Then, as the thing is my suggestion, and as I think I can see how I can manage to find out what we want to know, I wish you would let me venture to try it."

"No—no!" exclaimed Eagle Eye. "Yer by far too young, boy, ter venture on sich an undertakin', an' then, what could yer do without yer rifle? Jist tell me that."

"Ah, but you see I propose to take my rifle with me."

"But I say yer mustn't think o' sich a thing as goin'!" cried the backwoodsman, hotly.

"Wait before you judge, Sol. Let us hear the boy's plan," said Flying Foot, calmly.

"It's just this—come here."

And the boy, leading the way to the edge of the rock, pointed downward toward the water's edge.

"Do you see that thick-branched cedar?" he asked; "the one stranded on the rocks below?"

"Yes, certainly," was the reply.

"Well, one of you can help me get it afloat, and I can secure my rifle, pouch and horn where they will be out of sight and keep dry; then I'll get into the water on the further side, and drift down with the current, and only land when I am quite sure it will be perfectly safe to do so."

"But in case you find an enemy how will you get back with your rifle and equipments?" asked Flying Foot, curiously.

"Ah, if I find an enemy I do not propose to leave him alive."

"But they may be in force—what then?"

"In that case I shall know how to manage when the time comes, you may be sure," responded the boy, confidently.

"I think the plan is feasible," said Flying Foot, after a moment's consideration. "I'm inclined to let the boy go. He seems to know what he's about, and it's well to cultivate self-reliance in one like him. He'll make a great hunter and scout one of these days, my word for it."

"Yes," said Seth Sayle, "let the yonker go."

"Waal—waal," muttered Sol, "ef yer all be agin' me, I'll not say nay, but it jist gives my heart a wrench, I kin tell yer, fer I love him like he was my own flesh and blood."

On hearing Sol grant his permission, Little Deadshot started up joyously. At that moment Myra put out her hand.

"Hal," she said, "I feel real sorry to have you go into this great danger—must you?" and as she looked up at him great tears started from her beautiful eyes.

"I don't believe there is any real danger, Myra," said the boy; "and even if there was, I would go into it gladly, yes, and do much more than that for your sake. But please don't be alarmed, I shall come back all right," and he was about to hurry away.

"Careful," said Flying Foot, warningly. "If there is any one on the opposite shore, you may be sure they are watching our every movement with jealous eyes. We must make them think we have simply gone into the cavern to get a little rest."

This hint was acted upon, and a sentinel having been posted, all the others disappeared from the summit of the rock.

Then, cautiously, Little Deadshot, accompanied by Flying Foot and Eagle Eye, made his way down the steep side of the rock to the water's edge below.

The cedar which the boy had pointed out, was a young tree that had

been uprooted by the action of the water, and borne down by the current to the spot where it was now lodged.

It was thickly covered with branches, and after shoving it out into the river, they found no difficulty in secreting the boy's dread weapon and ammunition. Then, plunging into the water and making his way to the side which would be furthest from the shore where, if anywhere, the spies were likely to be concealed, Little Deadshot just permitted his head and one hand to appear above the surface.

His head was completely hidden by the branches of the tree, one of which he held on to in order to support himself and to guide his impromptu craft.

Quickly the cedar was carried away from the rock and into plain view from the shore.

This was the moment all dreaded, and without for an instant permitting themselves to be seen, the trappers carefully watched the woods which they feared might shelter an enemy.

Away drifted the cedar. Further and still further down the stream it was borne, and yet there was no demonstration from the shore.

Were there no spies in the woods? And if there were, had they not noticed the floating tree? And if they had seen it, did they suspect nothing?

CHAPTER XVI.

CAPTURED—THE ESCAPE—IN A TIGHT FIX.

Down beyond the bend in the river floated the cedar, and then, by a stupendous effort, Little Deadshot managed to impel it toward the shore.

At length it lodged on the bank, and quickly securing his rifle and equipments, the brave boy started to land.

He was just struggling up the bank, when he suddenly felt himself seized by a powerful hand, and lifted, with a jerk, to a higher level.

Then the hand released its grasp, and he found himself confronted by a savage looking warrior.

"Ugh! Little Surekill very much welcome," exclaimed the Indian, with a broad grin.

For a moment the boy was too thoroughly dumfounded to speak or even to think; but this did not last long. Before the savage had done grinning his wits were at work again.

He quickly comprehended that this Indian was one of a number, and that he had been sent down the river by his companions to watch the cedar. Therefore, if he could manage to free himself from him he might easily escape before the others could come up, or better still, if he could kill him without noise, he might yet find out all he had come to learn, and get back to the island in safety.

His knife as well as his tomahawk were handy in his belt. Could he not use one or the other of them?

One thing he discovered at a glance, the savage was inclined to treat him as a boy, and was more than likely to presume too much on his own superior strength and stature.

"Come!" exclaimed the Indian at length, "you go with me!"

Little Deadshot thought it best to seem to submit with a good grace, and so at once prepared to follow his captor.

"Ugh! not that way," said the cunning savage, hastily. "You before—I follow."

The boy started ahead with a slight feeling of disappointment, glancing at his heart.

Now every faculty was set at work to find a way out of his most unpleasant dilemma.

Presently the Indian himself came to his assistance.

"Stop!" he suddenly exclaimed.

The boy came to a halt, and turned toward him.

"You heap shoot with that rifle. Great Spirit charm it. Good Injun; no good for paleface boy. Give to me."

And again the cunning expression came into his face as he reached out his hand for the beloved weapon.

It was the very worst thing he could have done, for like lightning the boy determined in his own mind the course he would pursue.

The Indian eagerly seized the rifle, and then pointing to the belt, said:

"Tomahawk—knife."

Little Deadshot took a single step toward him, and drawing his knife, made as if he would hand it to him.

At this moment both of the Indian's hands were fully occupied, he having his own weapon in one, and his prisoner's in the other.

The savage, in a clumsy way, reached to take the knife.

Like a flash, Little Deadshot raised the weapon, and the next instant buried it to the very hilt in his captor's heart.

The warrior fell to the ground and expired without a groan.

As the boy gazed down upon the lifeless body he shuddered.

"That seemed more like real murder than anything I ever did before in all my life," he murmured. "I hope I shan't have much of such work to do. But it was necessary; yes, it was necessary."

He now quickly recovered his rifle, and on second thought, possessed himself of the dead warrior's knife and tomahawk.

He then took his rifle and equipments, and carefully hid them in a hollow tree.

Once more he returned to the body, and for some moments stood gazing thoughtfully down into the face of the dead, his hand playing nervously with his scalping-knife the while.

"No—no," he muttered at last. "'Tain't a white man's gift, no how, nor a white boy's either, for that matter, whatever Flying Foot says. Yes, he must be wrong about it, because I feel something within me, that tells me so."

"No—no," he continued, addressing the corpse; "I had to kill you, not only for my own sake, but for the sake of those on the rock; but I will not scalp you—and nobody else shall."

Then stooping down, he grasped the body by the shoulders, and quickly dragging it to the river bank, thrust it out into the stream. The strong current caught it and quickly bore it from his sight.

All this had consumed some time, and now Little Deadshot began seriously to consider what it was best for him to do. Should he carry out his original intention of making his way to the point opposite the island, or should he return to his friends at once, supposing it was possible for him to do so?

Like more than one question that had been settled for him that day, the answer was at hand.

The sharp snapping of a twig attracted his attention.

Fortunately a thick growth of elders screened him from view, while at the same time he could see all that might be passing near him.

Presently two Indians approached. They were following the trail of their companion.

Little Deadshot watched them until they had reached the point where the cedar had come ashore, and he had landed with the help of his captor.

Then fully comprehending that he must change his position without delay, he ran lightly down the bank and entered the water.

This was to lead the Indians to suppose that he had either crossed the river or returned to the island by swimming. But, in truth, he waded up the stream, keeping well in shore and under cover of the foliage.

Presently he landed on a stone, at some distance above the point where he had entered the water, and reaching upward, grasped a vine hanging from the limb of a tree, and swinging himself forward, caught hold of the branch of another tree at some distance beyond.

From this he swung himself into a third, and so on, until he was fully a hundred and fifty feet from the river, and his feet had not touched the ground once.

The trunk of the tree on which he now found himself was hollow, with the opening more than twenty feet above the ground. Quickly he let himself down into it, making a rest for one foot by forcing the captured tomahawk into the soft wood a little below the opening, which was partially concealed by foliage, and from which he peered forth in order to keep informed of whatever might be passing around him.

All his movements heretofore had been most cautious. He was quite satisfied that he had not once been seen; now the question was, would his cunning enemies discover his hiding-place?

That important point he well knew would not remain long in doubt.

From where he was lodged he could not see the Indians who were following up the trail of their lost companion; but he knew that, step by step, they were slowly unraveling all his movements up to the time

he entered the water. Would they lose the trail there? On the answer to that question perhaps depended his very life.

Suddenly a low but bitter cry arose on the air.

"Ah! they know their companion is dead!" muttered Little Deadshot. "They have found his rifle and equipments. I ought to have been still more careful in hiding them. Now what next, I wonder?"

It was growing quite late in the afternoon, and the boy was beginning to hope that darkness would soon come to cover his flight, when a slight sound, as of footsteps passing near him, attracted his attention.

He looked down and saw two more Indians at no great distance.

"Ah!" he thought, "they have come in answer to the death cry. Now the search for me will begin in earnest."

Suddenly the first two Indians came into view. They were following the trail to the shore.

They stopped at the point where he had entered the water.

Here the others joined them.

A short conference ensued.

It ended by their dividing, two going up the river and two down.

Little Deadshot's interest in the movements of the first party now became intense.

At last they came to the stone on which he had landed.

It was still wet, while all around was perfectly dry.

This fact one instantly pointed out to the other.

They began eagerly to look about for further signs.

Suddenly one of them took hold of the vine and quickly demonstrated that it had been pulled downward, and even showed where a leaf had been pulled off.

The scent was now warm, if not red hot.

A low cry speedily brought the others to the spot, and soon all were eagerly engaged in the search.

Nearer and nearer they drew to the hollow tree. At last they were almost beneath it.

Little Deadshot now gave up all for lost; but, notwithstanding, he firmly resolved to sell his life as dearly as possible.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE INDIANS RE-ENFORCED—PREPARING FOR THE ATTACK BY LAND AND WATER.

THE relentless savages were almost beneath the very tree in the hollow of which Little Deadshot lay concealed.

It was true, however, that they could now discover no sign of his movements, and were only searching for some spot in which he might possibly have hid himself; but in the search they allowed nothing to escape their sharp and penetrating eyes.

At last one of their number looked upward, and fastened his gaze on the branches which partially covered the opening of the boy's hiding-place.

Little Deadshot thought surely his retreat must be discovered now.

Just at that instant, when all seemed lost, the shrill call of the catbird broke on the air.

In a moment the four Indians gathered together, and a whispered conference ensued.

Before it was over the same notes again awoke the echoes of the forest.

Without the loss of an instant's time three of the number started off in the direction from whence the sound had come, leaving one to continue the search and capture the paleface if possible.

It was now growing rapidly dark, and Little Deadshot hoped much from the friendly shelter of the night; meantime, he kept a jealous watch on the sentinel-like figure moving about near the foot of the tree below.

At the camp on the creek above, all of the rafts had been completed, and another council having been assembled, it was decided that, as the party on the little island undoubtedly knew of their intention, little could be gained by too long delaying their attack.

They, therefore, determined to drop down to the mouth of the creek, and the moment it was dark enough to conceal their movements, land on the island.

Just as they were about to embark they were joined by Wonsatasate, the chief, Lank Larkin, the renegade—or Red Wolf, as he was usually called by the Indians—and more than a dozen warriors.

The renegade's joy fairly knew no bounds when he learned of the close quarters into which his ancient enemy had been driven, and in the presence of the chiefs and warriors, he swore a terrible oath that he would never more taste food until the scalp of Eagle Eye was dangling at his belt.

A couple of scouts were now sent down the river to ascertain if there had been any movement on the part of the enemy.

They found only one of the six sentinels or spies at his post, and it was at their suggestion that this one gave the signal agreed upon for the return of the others.

As the reader already knows, three of the four still living responded to the call.

By the time these three had made their report to the runners, it was quite dark, and therefore they concluded it was not best to return to their solitary companion, waiting in the vicinity of the hollow tree.

The two scouts or runners, as of course in duty bound, hurried back with all speed to the camp on the creek.

The chiefs and head men gathered eagerly about them, and heard in grave silence all they had to say.

It was quickly determined that the attack should be no longer delayed, and further, that Takatoka, with his warriors, should follow out their original plan of landing on the island by means of the canoe and rafts, while Wonsatasate, in company with Red Wolf and their twelve savages, should follow down the stream, and cross over by means of the narrow neck of sand.

The land party was to be governed by the movements of those afloat, and not attempt to cross over until the others had landed.

At last all the preparations were completed, and Takatoka, with Cheecaqua and several of the most distinguished warriors, led the way in the canoe, while the others of his immediate band followed on the lightly constructed rafts, the land party marching in Indian file just within the shelter of the forest, and keeping, as nearly as possible, abreast of those on the river.

All went well until they had arrived within a hundred yards or so of the rocky island, when all at once the sky became clouded and the darkness suddenly seemed intense.

The war party could now hardly see their hands before their faces. This was particularly unfortunate for them at the moment, for in the neighborhood of the island the river was filled with jagged rocks, some protruding themselves above the surface of the water, while others lurked treacherously just below. And the very presence of these rocks, together with the island itself, and the sand-bar which connected it with the main land, caused a rapid current that one needed great skill and all his faculties to avoid.

The Indians well knew the dangers they were now incurring, and exerted themselves to the utmost in order to shun them.

Those in the canoe might have succeeded had the clouds continued to obscure the heavens and conceal their movements from the watchful eyes of those on the rock, but all at once the clouds dispersed, and the pale moon darted her silvery rays upon the scene.

In an instant the attacking party on the river was plainly revealed to the wary scouts. The canoe was still in advance, and directly ahead of it was a rocky needle protruding itself above the surface of the river, and around which the water was foaming and boiling as it hurled itself against it, and then whirled away, only to be caught and impeded again by yet another rock at a short distance beyond.

No sooner had all this been unveiled to the gallant little band on the island than a brace of rifles rang out, and with yells of mortal agony, two of the savages in the canoe fell—one into the river and the other into the bottom of the boat.

Both of these had been selected from their companions for a particular reason. They were using paddles, and were endeavoring to guide the frail craft out of danger.

Now the paddles were lost, and in an instant the canoe was swept upon the needle-like rock, and overturning, lodged there, while all its occupants were thrown into the river.

The triumphant shout of Flying Foot and the Catamount, who had fired the shots, were heard far above the death cries of the savages, and then, suddenly, as the sounds died away, the thick curtain of clouds closed in, and darkness like a pall shut the scene from their view.

"Now, then, what's the best thing ter do?" asked Seth Sayle, after a moment of profound silence. "It's sartin sure that some o' ther pesky critters'll 'scape from ther water an'll land outer this 'ere rock, an' then we'll have ter fight for't."

"Yes, confound 'em!" muttered Eagle Eye, "yer can't drown ther varmints, nohow, an' more'n that, Flyin' Foot, I reckon as how I seed a few ef not more o' ther critters inter ther woods thar."

"I was just thinking that something of the kind was likely to be the case," said Flying Foot, in a musing tone. "They wouldn't send all their force by water. No; they mean to attack us both in front and rear. If we only had that canoe, now."

"What then?" asked the Catamount, quickly.

"Why, we might give the bloody wretches the slip—don't you see? We could haul it around to the lower side of the island, put the girl into it, and then get in ourselves—it would hold us all, with room to spare—and we could go down the river under cover of the darkness, and be in a place of safety almost before they'd have time to miss us; that's the idea."

"Ah, but the boy—Little Deadshot?" said Sol Somers, anxiously.

"I don't think he has or will come to harm," said Flying Foot, confidently. "We could draw in toward the shore and call him. You and he have some signal that is understood between you, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then I think we could manage that."

"I'll captur' that 'ere canoe fur yer, Injun Slayer," said the Catamount, suddenly.

"Bless you, old fellow!" exclaimed Flying Foot, "and I believe you can do it. I'll cover your attempt, at any rate, and woe to the red-skin that undertakes to hinder you."

"Come, let us start at once—and, Sol, you and Seth defend the pass from the main land. Quick, now—there's not a moment to be lost."

An instant later the summit of the rock was deserted.

CHAPTER XVIII.

EAGLE EYE AND SETH HOLD THE PASS—THE ATTEMPT TO SECURE THE CANOE.

EAGLE EYE and Seth Sayle groped their way to a rock, from behind which they could command the narrow sand-bar.

They had hardly reached the spot, when, through the darkness, they could just faintly distinguish a number of crouching figures, moving rapidly toward the island.

"Let's let 'em have it, Seth," said Sol, at the same time raising his weapon, "an' then load agin as fast as we kin."

"All right, Sol."

"Yer ready?"

"Yes; jist say ther word, an' I'm with you."

"Good 'nough! Ready—fire!"

The two reports blended in one, and from the yells of pain and anger that went up from among the dusky savages, they were certain their bullets had done some execution.

They reloaded their pieces with the utmost dispatch, fearing the savages might, while they were yet empty, rush on to the charge.

And indeed this would have been the case, but the Indians had no idea there were only two defending the isthmus; they supposed there were four, at least, and that while two discharged their weapons, the others reserved their fire.

In this they were confirmed the instant they attempted to move forward, for again the rifles rang out, and again two of their number fell.

It did not seem possible that rifles could have been loaded so quickly.

At last, urged on by the chief and renegade, they once more darted forward.

Again two of their number fell.

Now, sullenly but determinedly, they retreated toward the cover of the forest.

Meantime, Flying Foot and the Catamount descended from the summit of the rock toward the point nearest the needle, upon which the overturned canoe had lodged.

When they had reached the spot, they could see nothing but the boiling, foaming water about their feet.

Catamount hesitated only for an instant. He looked at the seething foam, and then, having handed his rifle to his somber friend, grasped him by the hand, and said:

"Good-by, Injun Slayer. I meanter come outer this all right, but e! I don't, jist think o' me sometimes when yer scalpin' of a redskin, an' recollect that of all ther men outer ther top o' this yer airth, I loved an' respected you ther most."

Flying Foot pressed his hand warmly, and bade him a fervent good-by. Then, silently, the Catamount let himself down into the water.

It required a tremendous effort to stem the current, but the Catamount moved steadily through the water in the direction where he supposed the canoe to be lodged.

At length a dark object arose before him. It must be what he sought.

Involuntarily he looked back. He at once saw that the Indian Slayer was wholly hidden from his view by the darkness, and instantly understood that he must expect no aid from him, in case he met with any opposition on the part of the savages.

Again he started forward; at that moment a low, dark object was whirled rapidly past him. He caught a glimpse of it as it swept by, and knew that it was one of the rafts, but wholly untenanted.

What had become of those who had navigated it? Were they drowned, or should he find them in the vicinity of the spot toward which he was making his way?

Nearer and nearer he drew toward the object that had first attracted his attention. At last he was close upon it.

It was indeed a needle-like rock, but there was no birch-bark canoe either on it or near it.

A feeling of bitter disappointment took possession of the Catamount's soul.

He swam around and around the rock, hoping against hope, and utterly unable to tear himself from the spot.

Suddenly a low voice, at no very great distance, attracted his attention.

He listened with all his ears.

He perfectly understood the Cherokee language, and, the moment he distinctly caught the words, fully comprehended their meaning.

"Here—this way—the canoe is off here—quick! I must have help to remove it," were the first words he heard.

"Yes, we will come at once," responded another voice.

"Good! but bring paddles with you!" said the first speaker.

"We will do so," was the reply, and the Catamount judged, from the sound, that the second speaker was as far away from the first as he was himself, and it was more than likely that he would have to return to the shore for paddles. What then was to hinder him from reaching the spot before him?

He would attempt it, at all hazards.

No sooner resolved upon than he started, carefully taking the direction from whence the sound had come to him.

Soon another dark object appeared before him, and he was quickly satisfied that this was the rock he had been seeking.

As he drew still nearer, he was able to discern the canoe itself, and clinging to it he saw the dusky form of a savage.

Presently, from out of the darkness, appeared another figure, making directly toward the needle.

The Catamount at once put forth his best efforts, as did the other also, and they both reached the side of the canoe at the same time.

They could each dimly see the other, but to recognize one another, at the distance even of a few feet, was simply impossible.

"Take hold," said the Indian in possession of the canoe, "take a firm hold and lift up; can you do it?"

The other did not answer, and so the Catamount, supposing himself addressed, responded:

"Yes, easy enough."

What few words were uttered were, of course, in the Cherokee tongue.

"Did you bring the paddles?" was the next question.

"No," said the Catamount, quickly; "they will come soon." Then, as the dissatisfied Indian gave a discontented grunt:

"Now, then, lift!" and all three put forth their utmost strength, as the rushing waters helped to hold the canoe in place where it was wedged.

At last it was afloat, and as no one had yet appeared with the paddles, the first Indian began to direct its movements toward the shore.

The Catamount now began to consider what it was best to do. The silent party, who had reached the canoe at the same moment with himself, was near him, holding onto the gunwale about midships, while he himself was at the stern.

At length he had made up his mind; and letting go with his right hand, he drew his terrible knife, and then making his way close up behind him, he raised it to strike the fatal blow.

At that very instant the sound of several voices, a little to the right of them, caused his intended victim to quickly turn his head.

No sooner had he done so than the Catamount caught a fair view of his face.

Merciful Heaven! It was Little Deadshot!

The Catamount, in his astonishment, came near crying out and dropping his knife.

At length he recovered himself a little, and began to consider the matter.

How, in the name of goodness, had he come there? What was his object? And was he likely to accomplish it?

It would not do to ask then. He must wait for a more fitting opportunity, and meantime, act as he thought best.

Quickly placing his mouth to the boy's ear, he whispered:

"It's me—Catamount; slip around inter my place an' let me take care o' ther varmint ahead afore them other howlin' fiends descry us."

With a start of surprise and joy, the boy quickly and noiselessly made the change. Then the Catamount, moving rapidly toward the bows of the boat, came close upon the unconscious savage.

There was no new surprise awaiting him this time, and quickly raising his knife, he buried it in the back of his victim; then, before the dying Indian could cry out, he grasped him by the scalp lock, and pulling his head over backwards, severed his jugular vein.

Had he stopped here it would have been well, but having spent almost his whole life on the frontier and in the Indian country, many of the habits of the Indian, and especially that of scalping, had become second nature to him; so, leaving the canoe to the boy, he delayed long enough to tear the scalp from his victim's head.

While in the very act a fearful yell of rage and anger arose, and on hastily looking up, he beheld no less than eight or nine savages not more than fifteen feet away, and rapidly making toward him.

He gave one glance in the direction of the canoe, and then, involuntarily uttered a groan of despair.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FLIGHT FROM THE ISLAND—GLOOMY NEWS.

BUT although the Catamount had uttered a groan of despair, the next instant he had decided on his line of action.

Releasing his hold on the mutilated body of the savage, he at once plunged into the deep water, and made with all speed after the canoe, which only being retarded by Little Deadshot's feeble efforts, had already been carried by the swift current to a considerable distance, and was now in imminent danger of being dashed against the second needle, in which event the daring trapper knew all was irretrievably lost.

With ever-increasing yells the infuriated savages, who had just witnessed the slaying of their companion, and now saw the canoe itself slipping from their grasp, pressed on.

Nearer and nearer they came.

The Catamount looked eagerly ahead of him, and then glanced back.

One mighty effort more would fetch him to the canoe; but one effort more on the part of the Indians might put him within their power.

But already the canoe was close upon the rocks, and it must be saved for Flying Foot and his party at whatever cost. The boy alone, strong and brave as he was, could not accomplish this, so he must run the risk of the redskins' knives and aid him.

The next moment he was alongside the frail craft. Bracing his feet against the needle rock, which the canoe now almost touched, he impelled it a little to the right, and in an instant it was sweeping by the dangerous point.

"Into it, Deadshot—into it, ef yer kin git thar, an' leave me ter tackle these 'ere blood-thirsty critters!" cried the Catamount, eagerly.

Little Deadshot knew of how great importance the canoe was to the waiting islanders, and so lightly raising himself from the water, threw his body into the birch bark boat.

As he did so one of the Indians grasped it by the stern.

The next instant that savage was being whirled toward the rocky island, a corpse.

Then the canoe swept on, and as the Indians, with one accord, dashed through the water after the Catamount, he disappeared like a flash beneath the surface.

The next moment one of his pursuers, with a howl of fright and agony, vanished from the bewildered gaze of those about him.

Before they could recover from their astonishment another disappeared, and a moment later, still another.

This kind of warfare the Indians could not understand, and with feelings of fear, they began to hesitate.

The Catamount was altogether too anxious to see the canoe safely in the hands of his friends to follow up his advantage, and now that he saw a good opportunity for slipping away, he seized it.

The little craft was already out of sight, but he knew the general direction it must take, and so followed it.

At length he caught sight of it, driving at a rapid rate toward the island, and somewhat to the north of the point where he had left Flying Foot.

A little later it went ashore.

Soon after, Catamount himself landed on the same spot, and found Flying Foot fervently congratulating the brave boy on his daring and successful undertaking.

"I can't call it quite a success yet," said Little Deadshot, in answer to what the other had said.

"And why not, pray?" asked the Indian slayer, in some surprise.

"Because I left my rifle ashore, and I've got to go and fetch it off first."

"That will be a dangerous undertaking now, won't it?"

"I think not, there's no redskins about where I left it."

"I'm thinkin' ther sooner we dig outer this 'ere, ther better," exclaimed the Catamount, suddenly. "Yer see," he added, "ther pesky critters know we've got ther canoe now, an' that we'll be makin' off in it, so they won't delay the attack a minute longer than's necessary."

"You're sure they know the canoe is in our hands?" asked Flying Foot, somewhat anxiously.

"Yer kin jist bet, an' all 'cause I stopped for ter take ther ha'r off un a critter I prodded."

"I'm sorry for that, and as you say, we must get off at once."

"But I can't go without my rifle," said Little Deadshot, firmly.

"Are you sure you won't be runnung too much risk if you go for it?"

"Quite sure."

"Then I'll tell you what to do. Get your rifle and make for the first bend in the river. We'll stop there and take you off."

"All right, I'll do it, and now I'll start."

"Stop one minute, Little Deadshot, an' just tell me how you came to be out thar in ther river," said the Catamount, suddenly.

"I can't stop to tell you all about it now," responded the boy, "but I'll give you an idea. You see, they'd got me cooped up in a hollow tree. At least they left only one fellow to look after me, and as it got to be quite dark, he strayed some distance from my blding-place. Then I slipped out and concealed myself behind a handy tree, and when he passed that way again, as he did shortly after, I sent him at a double quick on his journey toward the happy hunting ground."

"Good!" exclaimed the Catamount, in a delighted tone.

"Well," continued Little Deadshot, "then I skulked 'round to see what the redskins were up to, and when the moon burst through the clouds I saw you and Flying Foot shoot the two paddlers, and saw the canoe overturn and lodge on the rock."

"It stuck me in an instant that if we only had that canoe before the discomfited Indians could rally again, we might give them the slip, and I determined to try for it."

"So, hiding my rifle, I made my way to the river and plunged in.

At least a dozen times I was as near, almost, to the Indians as I am to you now, but they did not know or suspect me. Once even one of them spoke to me, but I only gave a sort of grunt in reply and passed on."

"You are a brave, manly boy," exclaimed Flying Foot, emphatically.

"Yes, yer ther pride o' ther trappers, sure!" cried the Catamount.

"By the way," said Little Deadshot, as he was slipping into the water, "I ought to tell you that the Indians have been reinforced by some fourteen or fifteen men."

"Is that true?" asked Flying Foot.

"Yes, and one of them is Sol's old enemy, Lank Larkin, the renegade."

"This is bad news," muttered Flying Foot, as the boy disappeared.

"Yes," said the Catamount, "but they hain't got no sich number now, for I sent at least five o' ther critters on their last long tramp, while I was out inter ther river thar."

"And a mighty good piece of work it was, Catamount," said his somber friend, approvingly, "and now let's get the canoe around to the other side with all speed."

"Ther best way, Injun Slayer, is ter jist pick her up an' tote her 'round, or over the rock."

"Right; we'll do that way. You take hold of the other end."

In a very short time the canoe was floating in the comparatively calm water on the lower side of the island.

A few moments later Myra Merton and the four trappers were seated within it, while one of the number was directing its course toward the first bend in the river.

Just before they reached it, Eagle Eye gave the signal agreed upon, the notes of the whippoorwill.

There was no answering note.

Again he repeated the signal.

For a moment there was profound silence, during which they rapidly approached the bend. Then came a call, in a deeply-distressed, but yet manly voice:

"Flying Foot, Sol, I'm in the hands of the enemy—in the power of Lank Larkin. I'm to be put to the torture at sunrise. There's at least thirty of the wretches here. Go on down the river and save Myra at all events."

"Yes, ha-ha! he's in our power, an' we'll know how to serve him, Sol Somers! Yer kin have wot's left o' his bones, ter-morrer mornin'. Ha-ha!"

Then, after a single instant's pause:

"Now then! let 'em have it!" and instantly a volley was fired, and the bullets rained about the canoe like hailstones.

CHAPTER XX.

EAGLE-EYE AND THE CATAMOUNT PREPARE TO INVADE THE CAMP OF THE ENEMY.

WITH a cry of apprehension, Flying Foot peered toward that part of the canoe where Myra Merton was seated. He gave utterance to a sigh of relief when he saw that she was wholly unharmed.

"Quick, Catamount!" he exclaimed; "round the point, and then let the canoe drop down the river as fast as the current can carry it."

The Catamount dipped his paddle into the water with rapid strokes, the point was speedily rounded, and then as the current struck the light and buoyant craft, it was carried swiftly down the stream.

"Look-a-here, Flyin' Foot, yer ain't a-goin' to let that thar boy o' mine be totally chawed up an' then roasted by them thar fiends of hades, be yer?" asked Sol Somers, in an expostulating way.

"I assure you I have no such idea, Eagle Eye," responded the somber hunter, calmly.

"But," he added, after a moment's silence, "I'll tell you what I do propose to do. The boy has a cool head on his shoulders, and knows what he's about. He gave us sound advice a few moments since. It is my purpose to profit by it."

"I can't jist say as I know what yer drivin' at," muttered Sol.

"If I mistake not," said the Indian slayer, "he told us to look for the safety of the girl above all things. Now, I know a spot de-

the river that these copper-skinned demons never even dreamed of, and where she'll be as safe as she would be in the settlements about Philadelphia or New York. We'll first take her there, and then—"

"Stop this 'ere canoe," interrupted Sol, imperatively. "Stop her, I say, an' leave me out!"

"What do you mean, old comrade?" asked Flying Foot, in profound surprise. "Do you, of all men, doubt my word—my honor? You, who know me, perhaps, better than any other man in the colonies, unless it be young Daniel Boone, or, indeed, Seth, here."

"No—no, Flyin' Foot—as yer've now long been called in these parts—I doubt nothing; but as I've told yer afore, I love that thar lad, though he's neither kith nor kin to me, as though he war bone o' my bone, an' flesh o' my flesh—ay, as ther very apple o' my eye—an' I can't sit still an' inactive when harm may be a-comin' to him."

"Yer mustn't blame me, Flyin' Foot, but I know what that thar boy really is," then, in a lower tone: "An' I know that dirty skunk, Lank Larkin, too."

"Yes—yes; please let him go, dear sir!" suddenly pleaded Myra Merton. "I should never forgive myself if any harm should come to Little Deadshot on my account."

"Bless yer, sweet little honey-suckle, for them thar words!" exclaimed Sol, with a great sob.

"You will let him out?" again asked Myra, anxiously.

"Yes—yes, the Eagle Eye shall be put ashore—never fear," said Flying Foot, hurriedly, "but wait; we must have an understanding in this matter first. Now, hear what I have to say:

"The Catamount here knows every inch of the ground in the neighborhood of the rocky island, and he also well understands the habits of Takatoka's warriors. Suppose he disembarks with you, Eagle Eye, then you two can keep the savages in sight until morning. If a fair opportunity offers to rescue the boy, you will do it by all means; if not, then, while one does not let them out of his sight for a single moment, the other, at about four o'clock in the morning, will come back to the point where I shall land you, and there you will meet Seth and myself. Then we will see what all four can accomplish together. Meantime, you understand, the girl will have been lodged in the place of safety to which I have before alluded. Now, what do you think of my plan, Eagle Eye?"

"Think of it! I like it," said Sol, "an' only hope the Catamount is agreeable."

"Yer kin jist count onter me every time whar Little Deadshot's consarned," exclaimed the Catamount, emphatically.

"Very good, then," said Flying Foot; "we are now approaching the point where I propose to land you. Shall I take the paddle, Catamount?"

"Not yet, Injin Slayer; I know ther spot like a book—and here we be. Jump out, Eagle Eye, I'll follow."

Sol Somers was quickly on dry land, and the Catamount, having passed the paddle to the sober hunter, speedily found his way to his side.

Again the canoe was shoved off, and the two backwoodsmen on the bank of the river stood silently regarding it until it was lost in the gloom of the night. Then, turning, they plunged into the dark and somber forest.

No sooner had Little Deadshot made his unfortunate condition known to his friends, than he was dragged, by orders of the renegade, to a place nearly opposite the island, and not far from the spot where the Catamount had killed the two sleeping spies, after he had made away with their more wakeful companion.

Here the boy was tightly bound, and having been stretched upon the ground, was secured much after the manner adopted in the case of the young girl a few days before.

The camp-fire was lighted at no great distance, and a custom often resorted to by the Indians, was followed in this instance.

Near the spot where the boy lay was a towering tree, not less than 20 feet in diameter, but rotten at the core. Here the fire was kindled, and as the flames fed upon the rotten wood, the hollow trunk served as a chimney and conveyed the smoke upwards and away through an opening more than a hundred feet from the ground. It was nearly midnight before the camp became quiet, and even then less than five sentinels were posted and kept constantly on guard. Two of these were seated near the fire at the foot of the hollow tree, the other three were stationed at different points without the

Owing to the heavy losses Takatoka had met with in his several encounters with the terrible paleface scouts, and by the drowning of several of his men early in the evening, his present force, including the dozen warriors under Wonsatasate and Red Wolf, only amounted to twenty-nine braves.

These men were scattered here and there about the camp, but everyone with his weapons handy and ready for instant use.

It might have been between two and three o'clock in the morning, probably nearer three than two, when one of the outside sentinels suddenly raised his head and looked anxiously about him.

At length his gaze became fixed in a certain direction, but he neither moved nor uttered the slightest sound.

Presently he drew his knife from his belt, and having placed it between his teeth, dropped upon his hands and knees, and swiftly, yet noiselessly, made his way toward a dense clump of underbrush.

At the very moment he was entering it, a hand, firmly grasping a keen-edged knife, was thrust forward, and in an instant the savage's throat was cut from ear to ear.

He fell forward upon his face without a groan.

Without hardly disturbing a leaf, the body was drawn forward into the clump of underbrush, and not only was it denuded of the scalp, but stripped stark and naked besides. Then the rifle and other weapons being secured, the slayer of the Indian rapidly retreated behind a sheltering rock, at some distance down the river. Here, entirely out of sight of the Indians' camp, he kindled a fire, and then began to undress himself.

As the fire blazed up the strongly-marked features of the Catamount became plainly visible.

"Eagle Eye," he presently called, in a low, but distinct whisper, "I shall want yer help about now, I reckon."

At this summons Eagle Eye descended from the top of the rock, and approaching the other, asked:

"What kin I do fer yer, Catamount?"

"Jist help me to daub on this yer paint. I reckon as how I kin make as good a lookin' redskin as ther best on 'em. Comes sort o' nat'ral, somehow."

So, under the other's direction, speedily gave him a colored body, and a face, that for warlike fierceness, could not have been excelled in all the band in the camp on the river above them.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CATAMOUNT TURNS INDIAN—DEATH OF A CHIEF—THE FOUR TRAPPERS IN CONSULTATION.

The Catamount, having been artistically painted, donned the dead warrior's habiliments, and being completely dressed, turned toward Sol for his inspection and approval.

The latter uttered an exclamation of pleasure and surprise.

"Look sort o' nat'ral, eh?" asked the Catamount.

"Tomahawks an' scalpin' knives!" ejaculated the old trapper. "If I should meet yer enywhar in ther woods, Catamount, with that thar gear on, I should put a hunk o' cold lead clean through yer fur sartin sure—I would now, fur a fact."

The disguised trapper uttered a low chuckle of satisfaction.

"But look a-here," continued Sol, "ef Flyin' Foot or Seth Sayle shu'd happen onter yer unawares like, yer'd suffer—bet yer sweet life yer would."

"Ah, to be sure I run that risk," acquiesced the Catamount, "but I must take them chances; and now," he added, "jist you wait here. Remember, ef I want yer help, I'll give ther hoot o' un owl, and I reckon as how I can just do it, too."

"I haln't got no kind o' doubt on it," said Sol, somewhat impatiently. "An' now jist you hurry up, an' so let me know all about my poor boy."

"Yes—yes, Eagle Eye, I understand yer feelin's," said the other, good-naturedly. "An' I'll get awny at once. Just you smother that thar fire, or ther rascals above'll be smellin' ther smoke."

Eagle Eye acted on this suggestion, while the Catamount, now thoroughly disguised as a Cherokee warrior, again made his way toward the hostile camp.

After he had reached its neighborhood he became very wary. Presently he discovered one of the two remaining outside sentinels not more than twenty or twenty-five feet away from him.

The savage was standing with his back against a tree, and his face toward the river. His whole attention seemed to be fixed on something far away.

Like the feline animal from which he took his name, the Catamount stealthily crept up behind him. At length he was on the other side of the very tree against which the Indian's back rested.

The next moment his hand stole forward, and his terrible knife was buried deep in the savage's heart.

The dying brave, with a faint gasp, sank heavily to the ground. His slayer sprang from behind the tree, and, kneeling by his side, again plunged his knife into his bosom. Then, having secured his scalp and everything of value about his person, he took possession of his weapons and secreted them in a place of safety. He then once more approached the enemy's camp, and with more confidence now, feeling sure that if seen he would be taken for the warrior he had just slain.

At length he arrived in sight of the camp-fire, and beheld the two motionless watchers and the sleeping Indians scattered about.

For some time he sought in vain among the dusky forms for the captive boy. At last he discovered him, and gnashed his teeth in rage when he beheld the painful position in which he was tightly bound.

So closely was his attention fixed upon the boy that he did not hear a stealthy step approaching him from behind, and he was only recalled to himself by a hand being placed on his shoulder, and a sarcastic voice sounding in his ear.

"My young man seems more anxious to behold the comforts of the camp than to watch for the approach of an enemy," the voice said.

The Catamount, for a single instant, was nearly thrown off his guard, and was about to respond in English; but he quickly recovered himself, and managed to cast a hasty glance at the Indian by his side.

It was Cheecaqua, and no sooner had he recognized him than he understood that he must needs have all his wits about him, in order to deceive the wily chief.

But already more time had passed than was necessary to frame an answer.

"Why does not my young man speak?" asked Cheecaqua, impatiently—almost suspiciously. "Has his tongue forgotten its office?"

"Not so," responded the Catamount, at last: "but your young brave is ashamed to hold up his head, being discovered by so great a chief as Cheecaqua with his eyes where his back should have been."

"That is well," said the chief, pleased with the compliment to himself, "but I remember not your voice or features. By what name is my young man called?"

"The Nimble Stag," answered Catamount, readily enough, "and I have but just come to you from Oganasdoda's great tribe. I was with Wonsatasate and the Red Wolf."

"It is well," said Cheecaqua, apparently satisfied, "and now I will leave you. Let your eyes be like the hawk's by day, and the owl's by night."

Although this conversation had been carried on in a low tone—almost a whisper, yet it had not failed to attract the attention of the statue-like figures seated before the fire, and one of them, in answer to a look from the other, silently arose and approached the two.

Soon recognizing Cheecaqua, and from that fact concluding all was right, he returned to his companion and so informed him.

Cheecaqua was now about to turn away when the Catamount hindered him.

"I fear," he said, "that one of my companions is ill. I saw him lean up against that tree yonder, and then seat himself upon the ground. I am not certain, for I cannot see over the top of the underbrush, but I think he is now lying down. Shall we go to him together?"

"It will be well," and folding his blanket about him, the Indian led the way.

Soon he came upon the dead sentinel.

A low exclamation of fear and wonder escaped him, but quickly he bent downward the better to see how the brave had met his death.

That was a fatal curiosity.

The instant he was off his guard the Catamount's tomahawk was raised and then buried in his brain.

Without the loss of an instant's time, the disguised trapper possessed himself of the dead chief's scalp and weapons; then he recovered those he had secreted and hastened off to join the impatient Eagle Eye.

A very few moments sufficed to bring him to the place where he had left his companion, and the bearded trapper listened with intense interest to all he had to relate. Then, at the Catamount's suggestion, he started off toward the point where, some hours before, they had landed from the canoe.

As he drew near the spot he could just dimly discern the shadowy forms of two men, bent forward in listening attitude.

At length he was close upon them.

"Ah!" exclaimed one, as he caught sight of him, "I told Seth here that someone was moving through the forest. I knew I could not be mistaken, though I must say, Eagle Eye, you have a remarkably light foot."

"Ef yer'll jist take ther trouble to recollect," responded Sol, in a matter-of-fact sort of tone, "yer'll call to mind ther circumstance that I've followed mor'n one trail 'long with you, Injin Slayer, an' so nat'rally, I orter be light o' foot arter that."

"Thanks for the compliment," said the other, with a pleased smile.

Then, in a more business-like way:

"Well, I'm very glad you've come. What have you got to tell us?"

In a few hurried words Sol reported all that had taken place in and about the Indian camp.

Flying Foot uttered a low exclamation of satisfaction, and as they moved rapidly away, murmured in an undertone:

"The Catamount ain't fair to look upon, but he's a born genius—more than that, he's the right man in the right place when he's in these woods. We shall succeed to-night; yes, I'm thinking we shall surely succeed."

Presently they arrived at the shelving rock, where they found the Catamount patiently awaiting them.

Both Flying Foot and Seth Sayle gave an involuntary start on first beholding his savage-like appearance, but speedily their momentary apprehensions were turned into congratulations, after which they all drew close together for an earnest conference.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ATTACK ON TAKATOKA'S CAMP.

The conference between the stern backwoodsmen lasted only for a few moments; time was too precious to spend much of it in talking.

Their plans were quickly formed, and they at once set about putting it into execution.

Together they moved rapidly toward the Indian camp, never pausing until they had reached the spot where the two dead bodies lay.

These had not been disturbed, therefore it was fair to suppose their death was not yet even suspected.

Being satisfied on this important point, the trappers now separated, and, in different directions, three of them plunged into the gloom of the forest, leaving the disguised Catamount standing by the bodies of the dead braves.

From this spot he did not move for more than ten minutes. Then with noiseless steps he approached the silent camp.

All was precisely as he had seen it last. The two sentinels seated before the fire looked as though they had not moved hand or foot since they last took their places there, and the slumbering warriors, buried in their robes, were as motionless as the dead.

Having made sure that none but the two watchers were awake, the Catamount approached near enough so that his form could just be distinguished by the light of the smoldering fire, and then he uttered a low sound like the hissing of a serpent, that, he remembered, being the signal he had heard Takatoka use to attract the attention of his warriors.

No sooner had the sound passed his lips, than both the silent watchers aroused themselves, and peered eagerly into the gloom around.

Quickly their coal-black, glittering eyes discovered him, and by eager gestures, they asked what was the matter.

The Catamount beckoned for one of them to come to him.

The one he indicated being the younger, he looked inquiringly at his companion for approval, and on the other's gravely nodding his head, arose and started toward the shadowy form just without the camp.

As the young savage approached, the Catamount moved still deeper into the gloom of the forest.

"What has my brother to say?" asked the young Indian, suddenly coming to a determined stop and glancing uneasily about him. "Behold, my ears are open, let him speak!"

Seeing that he could draw him no further from the camp without giving a reason, the Catamount now also came to a stand, and said:

"My brother knows Cheecaqua, the wise chief, was with us to-night, watching with sleepless eyes over the safety of the camp?"

The young brave simply made a gesture of assent.

"The chief gave me some instructions before the stars began to pale," the Catamount went on, "and then he said he would go and speak with my companion, stationed by the great tree yonder, and afterward return to me. He went, but behold, he has not yet returned. I think it well that we should know what detains him."

"The Stag is no coward, as all of great Oganasdoda's warriors well know, but he thinks it wise and prudent that another should accompany him."

The young brave listened to the other's last words with an impatient sneer, but all he said was:

"Come," and at once led the way toward the place indicated.

He was close upon the spot before he discovered the dead bodies; then, as Cheecaqua had done, he uttered a low exclamation of astonishment and foreboding.

Raising his eyes from the bodies, he cast a quick, apprehensive glance around, and then fastened a suspicious look upon the Catamount.

But the cunning trapper's make-up was too complete, or the gloom of the forest too heavy for him to discover anything wrong, and then the Catamount seemed quite as much astonished as himself.

At last the young savage noticed that one of the dead Indians had been scalped, and, with a low cry of rage, he stooped over to see if the same was true of the other.

Instantly the Catamount took advantage of his position, and in another moment his dead body was added to the growing pile.

The victor now only waited long enough to secure the scalp of his victim, and then, as he again hastened toward the camp, he uttered the plaintive cry of a night-bird.

This was to inform his friends that he had been successful thus far.

At the dismal sound, the now solitary sentinel slowly raised his head, but seeing only a single Indian approaching, and supposing him to be his late companion, he again let it fall forward on his breast.

This was the most important—the most critical moment of the Catamount's life.

If the sentinel should continue to keep his head down, only for a single instant longer, all might be well; if he raised it, it was more than probable that all would be lost.

The silent sentinel did not move; he seemed like a bronze statue of meditation.

With light but rapid steps, the Catamount threaded his way among the sleeping braves, and approached the fire.

As he came up close to where the savage was seated, he paused. The other did not raise his head, but he uttered a sound that might be taken for an interrogation—a desire to know if all was well.

The disguised trapper gave a reassuring grunt, and at the same time raised his tomahawk.

At that instant the savage looked up.

What caused him to do so can hardly be explained; possibly it may have been something he saw in the position of the other's feet, or he may have had a presentiment of coming evil; at all events, he cast a hasty glance upward, and beheld the Catamount's bloody weapon swiftly descending.

He essayed to cry out, and to avoid the blow.

Too late! the cruel tomahawk buried itself in his skull, and with a low, dying groan he fell forward across the fire.

Within the gloom of the forest around, three eager pairs of eyes

had watched that fatal blow, and within the circle of the camp there was another and silent spectator.

The first were the paleface scouts, the last was the brave young prisoner.

For one moment after the death of the last of the five sentinels, all within and around the camp was as silent as the grave.

Then, with a noiseless and elastic tread, the Catamount approached the spot where Little Deadshot lay confined.

The boy eyed him eagerly—curiously.

The Catamount made a significant gesture, which had the effect of causing him to lie perfectly still.

At that very moment he caught a glimpse of Seth Sayle, peering from behind a tree at no great distance away. And now he was thoroughly convinced of what he had already suspected, that the painted warrior bending over him was not what he seemed.

His new friend quickly cut the bonds that bound him, but even yet he could not move, owing to the saplings which crossed him, and which the weight of the two savages, between whom he was lying, held down.

And now he saw his liberator make a gesture toward the forest.

The next moment he heard a faint sound as of footsteps approaching, and while his friend was bending over one of his guards, he suddenly beheld the somber Indian slayer bending over the other.

Flying Foot's knife descended like lightning, and as the keen blade penetrated the redskin's heart, the guard struck against his breast with a sickening thud.

At that moment the other Indian awoke, and endeavored to start up.

The Catamount quickly grasped him by the throat with his left hand, while with the other he plunged his knife into his bosom and fairly severed his heart in twain.

Eagerly the two trappers threw the dead bodies aside and started to raise the benumbed boy.

Before they could effect their purpose a wild yell of anger and alarm rang out.

An instant later shot after shot was fired, and all was wild confusion in the camp.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TERRIBLE BATTLE—EAGLE EYE MARKS HIS ENEMY.

It was Lank Larkin, the renegade, who had given the alarm. He happened to be sleeping at no great distance from the spot where Seth Sayle had stationed himself. Seth was watching the movements of Flying Foot and Catamount with eager interest, and as he beheld the death of Little Deadshot's two guards, and saw their bodies thrown aside, he involuntarily uttered an exclamation of satisfaction.

The sound of his own voice instantly recalled Seth to himself, and he bit his lip with vexation. But he was reminded of his situation too late—the mischief had already been done. He had awakened the renegade, who even now had started up and was looking about him.

The rascally white Indian took in the situation at a glance, and then it was that he uttered the yell of rage and anger that aroused the whole camp.

With a bitter curse Seth raised his rifle, and taking aim at the renegade's head, fired.

The aim was true, and by good rights the wretch who had caused more misery than any other one man in all the dark and bloody ground, should have dropped dead then and there.

But events do not always happen just as they should. There is a mysterious chance that seems, oftentimes, to protect the very worst of men.

It was so now.

While the trapper was in the very act of pulling the trigger, an Indian started to his feet directly in front of Red Wolf, and so received the bullet intended for the renegade in his own head. The next instant the man who had so narrowly escaped death, was rushing toward the other end of the camp, loudly rallying the warriors to the defense.

By this time more than a dozen shots had been fired—most of them

by the Indians, though Eagle Eye had brought down a brave who was on the point of hurling his tomahawk at Little Deadshot.

Fortunately, none of the bullets of the enemy took effect; this, doubtless, was owing to the fact that only one of the assailants was to be seen, or at least, recognized as such.

This, of course, was Flying Foot, who still lingered near the boy.

Little Deadshot himself narrowly escaped death, but being in a reclining position, most of the bullets passed over him.

"Git ter kiver, Flying Foot, git ter kiver!" exclaimed the Catamount, excitedly. "I'll bring off ther boy—sure! Ther howlin' demons don't suspect but that I'm all right. It's best ter leave it ter me!"

Flying Foot saw that this was true, and understanding that he could be of greater service to his friends in hiding, quickly slipped behind a tree.

The Catamount now raised the only sapling that held the boy down, and thrusting a rifle that had belonged to one of the dead Indians into his hands, said, in an emphatic tone:

"Now then, boy, jist you scoot! But keep low; don't raise yer head till yer git beyond ther brush yonder!"

Little Deadshot was not slow to follow this advice, and was soon out of range of the savages' bullets.

While the disguised trapper was aiding the boy to escape, Wonsatasate, who for a moment or so had been somewhat bewildered by the suddenness of the attack, rushed forward.

He saw the supposed Indian assisting the prisoner to his liberty, and with an angry howl hurled his tomahawk at his head.

Had he been less excited, no doubt the Catamount's life would have ended then and there; as it was, the weapon grazed the skin of his right temple, and passed on into the brush beyond.

Then seizing his knife, the now infuriated chief flew upon his prey.

But by this time the Catamount was thoroughly on his guard, and received his assailant with all the coolness of his nature.

The fight was short but bloody, each receiving several wounds, but the Catamount none of a serious nature. Suddenly, seeing the necessity of bringing the conflict to a speedy close, he first made a feint, and then buried the knife to the hilt in the chief's bosom.

The dying warrior flung up his hands wildly, and then fell backwards—dead!

The victor at once followed the example of his companions, and sought a cover. This he did for two reasons—some of the Indians near were about to attack him, and then he was liable to be taken for a redskin by his friends.

Up to this time none of the savages had ventured beyond the limits of the camp, for as the firing of the attacking party came from different directions, they supposed the trappers must have received reinforcements, and did not know where they might find an enemy.

Flying Foot had succeeded in killing another, and thus the Indian forces were reduced to eighteen; but as the whites only numbered five all told, the redskins still outnumbered them almost four to one.

Lank Larkin, with Takatoka, now directed the movements of the savages, and with fierce yells they rushed upon any point where they suspected the trappers to be weakest.

Then the other whites sent forth their leaden messengers of death.

Little Deadshot, having managed to recover his own rifle, was by this time able to take a hand in the game, and soon he had sent two of the copper-colored demons to their final account, while Sol Somers dispatched a third.

This good luck on the part of the trappers left the Indians fifteen, or only three to one; still they were too strong to make it a fair fight.

Little Deadshot now did his utmost to single out Sol's bitter enemy; but he could nowhere find him, though from time to time he thought he could distinguish his voice, as he urged on his warriors to another attack.

At length it so happened that all of the rifles of the palefaces were empty at one and the same time.

At that very moment the Indians made a rush on a point where Seth Sayle and the Catamount were concealed.

It was now just beginning to grow light, and the savages could better understand the real weakness of their enemy.

For a moment it seemed as though the two must inevitably perish.

Then it was that Little Deadshot rushed forward, and catching up a rifle that had fallen from the nerveless grasp of the dying Indian, he

quickly leveled it at the head of the brave who was about to slay Seth Sayle, and in an instant put a bullet through his brain.

At the same moment the Catamount, seeing an opportunity, quietly slipped into the ranks of the Indians, and taking care to get well in their rear, he was soon able to put his knife through one of them without being detected by the others.

By this time Flying Foot and Eagle Eye had reloaded their pieces, and an instant later two more of the redskins fell—one dead, and the other mortally wounded.

Again urged forward, the Indians, maddened by their repeated losses, dashed at the spot where Seth had been concealed.

But they failed to find him, the wily old trapper was gone.

Just then, while they were searching for his new hiding-place, another young brave, who happened to be in front of the Catamount, fell dead without a groan. The cunning trapper's knife had quickly found his heart.

But a moment later the disguised paleface came near paying dearly for his savage appearance; for Seth Sayle, who had managed to get quite around to the other side, seeing a fair mark, and failing to recognize his friend, drew a bead on him.

At the very instant he fired Little Deadshot, with a cry of apprehension, knocked his rifle aside, and the bullet, just missing the head for which it had been intended, sped onward and carried off a part of the renegade's left ear.

With a cry of fright and pain the sneak darted to cover, and seeing how rapidly his warriors were melting away, and how near he himself had come to death, he began seriously to consider the advisability of ordering a retreat.

A little later, when another of his braves had dropped by his side, and their total number had dwindled to nine, his mind was made up, and he began to look about him to find Takatoka, in order to get his consent to the measure.

He discovered him at last, and thinking himself unobserved, started forward through the underbrush to join him.

No sooner, however, had he left his cover than Sol Somers' eagle eyes were upon him.

The next instant his rifle rang out. Swiftly sped the leaden messenger to its mark, but Lank stopped just in time to save his worthless life, yet not soon enough to escape wholly unharmed. The bullet carried away the greater part of his nose!

Such a howl as went up it's quite safe to say never was heard in the dark and bloody ground until that moment, and before its echo had died away, the wounded renegade was out of sight.

"Twan't a good shot," mused Sol. "No, it couldn't be called a good shot no how you kin fix it; but I marked him, yes, I marked him fur sartin sure. His friends—if he's got eny—'ll know him now, wharever they may happen ter find him."

Eagle Eye's last shot, and the howl of the renegade seemed to take the heart out of the remaining savages, and with one accord they broke and ran.

"After 'em—after 'em!" yelled the Catamount. "Down with the varmints!"

"Yes, don't let one escape, if you can help it!" called out Flying Foot, sternly.

Just then Little Deadshot, who had again reloaded his rifle, raised it to his shoulder.

His aim was careful—deliberate.

Crack!

There was no death cry; but a noble looking warrior threw his arms wildly about him, swayed to and fro for a moment, and then fell heavily to the ground.

Some of the fleeing Indians had glanced back, and seen the effects of that fatal shot. As they did so they gave one wild yell of consternation and despair, and then swiftly disappeared.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DEATH OF TAKATOKA—A LEAF FROM THE RENEGADE'S HISTORY.

THE trappers gave a loud shout of triumph as the noble warrior fell, and Flying Foot dashed eagerly forward to secure his scalp, while

at the same time the others, excepting Little Deadshot, hastened after the retreating redskins.

On reaching the fallen brave, the Indian killer dropped on his knees by his side, and was about to begin his disgusting work, when slowly the Indian opened his eyes.

"What! it's the chief, Takatoka himself," exclaimed Flying Foot, somewhat astonished.

"Yes—yes, Takatoka, the great warrior, is about to start on the long journey to the happy hunting ground," murmured the dying brave. Then making an effort to raise his head: "Where is the little sure-kill?"

"Not far away," responded the somber hunter.

"Let him come," murmured the chief. "I have something to say to him."

Flying Foot summoned the boy, who was gazing with eager interest in the direction of the rocky island.

Reluctantly he obeyed the call.

The chief saw him approach with evident satisfaction.

"You very brave boy," he said. "Make heap great warrior some day. Take many scalps."

Little Deadshot gazed upon the result of his deadly work, but uttered no word in reply.

"You lived with Indians' enemy—great trapper—old Tom," said the chief.

"Yes, with Tom Hunter," said the boy, wondering.

"He take you from Indians?"

"Yes, many years ago."

"When you so high," and the dying brave with difficulty raised his hand and indicated the height of a boy of about five years.

"Yes—yes," exclaimed Little Deadshot, eagerly, while Flying Foot drew nearer, also deeply interested in what was being said.

"You come a long way—from the north," continued the chief.

"Yes," acquiesced the boy.

"You got scar on head, where tomahawk strike."

"Yes—yes," and Little Deadshot eagerly removed his cap and exhibited the scar.

"I know—I know," murmured the dying chief, as he looked up with glassy eyes.

"What! can you tell me who I really am?" asked the boy, eagerly.

"How did you know I had that scar?"

"I was there—saw white rascal throw tomahawk," was the reply.

"What! were you among those who killed my mother?"

"Yes," said the redskin.

An unpleasant look came into Little Deadshot's face, but in a moment it had passed away, and in a calm voice, he asked:

"Who was that white villain?"

"The Red Wolf," responded Takatoka.

"What!" exclaimed the boy, "was it really Lank Larkin, the renegade?"

"Yes, the Red Wolf—white Injun."

"Then it was that miserable villain, Lank Larkin, who helped to murder my mother," muttered the boy. "Yes, he helped to kill her, and my poor little brothers and sisters."

"You say true," murmured the chief. "He get Oganasdoda to go there with many braves. He hate your father and mother heap much. You find him. Make him tell all. He heap bad man."

"Yes—yes, and I will find him; but was it Oganasdoda who led that expedition?"

"Yes; and he was going to adopt you, make you great chief."

"Ah!" murmured Little Deadshot; "it seemed as though that great chief was not altogether a stranger to me."

"Where was this place to which Red Wolf conducted you? Where did this cowardly murder of an innocent woman and feeble children occur?" demanded Flying Foot, in an agitated tone.

"Far—far to the north—great river—Red Wolf—white In—Ogan—" then a gasp, followed by a faint sigh, and the Indian chief was dead.

Flying Foot turned from the dead brave, and looked long and earnestly at the boy by his side.

"We must talk farther of all this," he said, at length. "I feel a strange presentiment of what is yet to come."

"And that miserable wretch, Lank Larkin," he continued, in a musing tone. "He must be found; more than that, he must be taken

alive," and there was a glitter in the somber hunter's eyes unpleasant to see.

"By the way," he asked, suddenly, "why are he and Sol Somers such great enemies?"

"I don't know that I fully understand the matter," responded Little Deadshot, in a thoughtful tone, "but this much I am sure of: Lank joined our trappers one summer, in the valley of the Allegheny, pretending to have come from a northern settlement, and the following winter he accompanied them to our town. That was before you ever came there, sir."

"Yes—yes, go on," said his listener, impatiently.

"Well," continued the boy, "while there Lank fell in love, or professed to fall in love, with a beautiful girl, a great favorite in the settlement, but she would have nothing to do with him; declared she knew he was a bad man; more than that, she was engaged to another, a young friend of Sol."

"Well, one night this young man went to pay a visit to the girl. He remained with her until quite late, it being some time after eleven o'clock before he bade her good-night and started for his own home.

"He never reached it."

"The next morning his dead body was found at a short distance from the girl's home, terribly mangled and scalped."

"Some folks believed it was the work of Indians. Old Tom Hunter and Sol believed it was the fiendish deed of Lank Larkin, and determined to watch him."

"For a day or two they followed him everywhere, and found out nothing. On the third day they were called away from the settlement, and when they returned the girl was gone. Carried off by the Indians, it was said—kidnapped by Lank Larkin, Sol declared, and as he, too, was missing, this seemed most probable, and in company with old Tom and Seth Sayle, Eagle Eye started in pursuit."

"The trappers had not followed the trail long before they knew to a certainty that Lank was the villain; then they hurried forward with renewed energy. They tracked him to an Indian camp, and by cunning management saved the girl. Afterwards Sol wounded Lank severely, but never yet has he been able to kill him, as he has sworn to do."

"That is all I know about the matter, though it is quite possible there is much more; but you can readily understand that after saving the girl from his cruel clutches and then badly wounding him, Lank don't love my good friend very much."

"I should say not; neither do I wonder at Eagle Eye's enmity, after the cowardly renegade killed his friend. But mark me, my boy,—and here the somber hunter became very serious—"it is you and I must find this same Lank Larkin. I take it that it is our business to capture and punish him, even more than your friend's. Will you aid me in this?"

"Of course I will," exclaimed Little Deadshot, "and if I am not greatly mistaken, I can tell you where he is at this very moment."

"What! you know where he is concealed? Tell me where, then, for Heaven's sake, tell me at once."

"On the rocky island; I am sure I saw his sneaking form stealing up the side toward the cave, just as you called me to the dying chief."

"We will hasten over at once, then. But wait; although we owe this dead Indian some kindness, yet I am sure we will make no mistake if we take his scalp with us."

"Please don't," said the boy, hastily.

"What!" exclaimed the somber Indian slayer, fiercely; "you say that? You, who heard him confess that he was one of the party who killed and scalped all your people, and then burned your home?"

Hal said no more, but he hastily turned away, that he might not witness the disgusting sight.

The chief's scalp was soon hanging from Flying Foot's blood-red belt, and then, having joined Little Deadshot, the two silently and rapidly hastened toward the island.

CHAPTER XXV.

SETH SAYLE WOUNDED—THE CRY FOR HELP.

As Flying Foot and Little Deadshot reached the isthmus, the boy was about to cross over first.

"No—no!" hastily exclaimed the Indian slayer, "you fall back, I go before. It's now or never that we shall receive his fire."

"Do you think he is still there, sir?" asked Little Deadshot, anxiously.

"The indications are that he is. See, here are his footprints, and there's no back track that I can see."

"That is true," said the boy, as he carefully examined the ground.

They now started forward, both holding their rifles ready for instant use. But they saw no signs whatever of the renegade, and reached the island without the slightest interference.

Then a careful search commenced. Every nook and corner was examined, but without result.

At length they had reached the summit.

Suddenly Little Deadshot happened to cast a glance down the river. Instantly he uttered an exclamation of disappointment and surprise. Flying Foot turned quickly.

The boy pointed to a small object on the water a long distance off.

"A thousand curses upon him!" hissed the dark hunter, with flashing eyes; "he swam from the island to the point where we left the canoe, and having found it is now making off in dead earnest."

Then a sudden thought occurred to him.

"My God! what if he should find the retreat where we left the young girl! We must hasten after him without a instant's delay!"

"What!" cried Little Deadshot, as with pallid cheeks he followed his companion down the rocky side of the island, "is that possible? I thought you said the retreat was unknown to any but yourself?"

"True—true!" returned the other, somewhat more cheerfully, "and unless the girl commits an imprudence I don't think it possible she can be found by an enemy. Nevertheless, we must hasten after the rascal!"

"By all means," acquiesced the boy, and again reaching the isthmus, they crossed to the other side.

As they were about starting off down the river, intending to follow its bank, without waiting for the return of their friends, they heard a slight sound at some distance behind them.

Flying Foot at once knew it to be a signal, and on looking back saw the Catamount hurrying toward them.

He soon came up, and in a few words the Indian slayer told him of the renegade's flight and of his own apprehensions.

For a moment the Catamount was silent, and a troubled look came into his face. At length, raising his head, he said:

"You're right, Injun Slayer, ther pesky critter must be followed up without unnecessary loss o' time; but ther fact is, thar's a big impediment in ther way o' startin' right off. I've got bad news fur yer, I'm sorry ter say."

"Oh, Catamount, there's nothing happened to Sol, I hope!" cried Little Deadshot, eagerly.

"No, boy, ther Eagle Eye's all right, barrin' his feelin's."

"What is the matter, then?" asked Flying Foot, anxiously.

"Seth Sayle's desperately wounded," was the reply, "an' I come ter tell yer, 'cause Eagle Eye thought mayhaps yer'd better see him afore we attempted ter move him."

"Yes," muttered the Catamount, more to himself than the others, "poor Seth's hit, but Eagle Eye's got ther scalp o' ther dirty skunk as did it."

"Desperately wounded, you said?" exclaimed Flying Foot, in a regretful tone. "Do you mean that he's received his death shot?"

"Atween you an' me, Injun Slayer, I fear as much," responded the Catamount, sadly.

"Let us go to him at once," said Flying Foot, decidedly. "We'll make a litter, and bring him down to the river. Oh, that I had another canoe now."

"Set yer mind ter rest on that thar pint, Injun Slayer. I'll find er birch-bark when it's wanted. Let's get back ter poor Sol, he's well nigh ravin', I can tell yer."

"I don't wonder," said Flying Foot—"no, I don't wonder; those two have followed the trail together for a lifetime—a much longer lifetime than is vouchsafed to most men who roam the forests."

"Yer right, Injun Slayer—that's no disputin' ye're right; but it comes hard on poor Sol, all ther same."

The three now set out to join the wounded trapper and his companion.

They found them near the bank of a little stream, something more than half a mile from the river.

A rude litter was speedily constructed, and the wounded man placed thereon.

He had received a musket ball in the left breast, a little above the heart. Flying Foot, the moment he set eyes upon him, knew he had received his death wound.

The others also comprehended the fact, and even Seth himself felt that his days—perhaps hours—were numbered.

"I've handled ther rifle for ther last time," he said, sadly; "but I'm powerful glad we so nearly wiped out that thar gang as harbored Lank Larkin. Only two on 'em's got clean away, an' they not fur long, I do believe. Ef only I could see ther last of ther dirty white skunk, I wouldn't mind goin' so much."

"You shall, Seth—yes, you shall!" exclaimed Flying Foot, emphatically. "And now, friends, let us be moving. Sol and the Catamount will carry the litter. Little Deadshot, you act as rear guard, while I go before."

The litter was raised by the two stalwart backwoodsmen, and moving forward in the order suggested by the Indian slayer, they rapidly approached the river.

They had made nearly half the distance, when suddenly Little Deadshot stopped, and quickly bringing his rifle to his cheek, fired.

A wild, savage yell rang out, and then for a moment all was silent.

The trappers had come to an abrupt stand, but before any one could speak, Flying Foot sprang away from the little party, like a panther to secure his prey, calling out, as he dashed forward:

"Move on—move on! Lose no time, I will quickly overtake you!"

They did as he requested, and had not made more than twenty yards before two rifle shots rang out in quick succession.

A little later Flying Foot joined them, and Deadshot noticed that two fresh scalps dangled from his already overloaded belt.

He also observed a little stream of blood trickling down the side of his face.

"You are wounded, I fear," he ventured to say.

"A mere scratch; I will repair damages when we are once afloat in the canoe. There's no time to spare now." Then casting a loving glance at the boy:

"Thanks to you, my brave lad, the last of that party of Indians is, as Seth would say, wiped out. Not one remains but the white wretch, Lank Larkin, and I hope we shall meet him before long."

"I just caught a glimpse of one of them skulking along under cover of the underbrush," said Hal. "They were probably watching our movements in order to bring on their friends to take revenge later."

"No doubt—no doubt; but there's no fear of that now."

"Ah! I shall live ter see ther last o' ther bloody gang," murmured Seth.

At length the river bank was reached, and Sol and the Catamount set down the litter. Then the latter went back for some distance into the woods, Flying Foot accompanying him.

Presently they came to a fallen tree, which was hollow for a considerable distance of its length.

Carefully removing some pieces of bark from the side, near the butt, the Catamount drew forth a canoe, in whch were paddles, fishing lines, and even provisions.

With Flying Foot's assistance this little craft was soon afloat, and Seth carefully placed within it. Then the others entered, and they started off on their voyage down the river.

Half an hour later, as they suddenly rounded a point, a bold bluff came into view, at the foot of which a canoe was stranded.

At that instant they heard a piercing scream, and then a female voice, calling:

"Save me! Oh! for mercy sake, save me!"

They looked, and half way down the bluff beheld Myra, struggling in the arms of the disfigured renegade!

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RENEGADE IN THE HANDS OF HIS ENEMIES.

At sight of the beautiful girl struggling in the arms of the now thoroughly loathsome-looking renegade, the trappers in the canoe sent up a cry of indignation and horror.

Lank Larkin heard the cry, and turning quickly toward them laughed in derision.

"Ha—ha! It's my turn now," he called out. "I've got you at a disadvantage. The girl is mine, and I mean to keep her. Come too near, though, or undertake to interfere with me in any way, an' I'll stab my knife through her heart. Ha—ha, yer don't relish that much, reckon," and slowly he continued his descent toward the river.

"What shall we do?" muttered Flying Foot. "It's simply galling to see that beautiful child clasped in the arms of that villain."

Little Deadshot was pale as death, but there was a dangerous light in his eyes.

"The contemptible skunk," growled the Catamount.

"Look a here, Flyin' Foot," called out Sol Somers, who was seated at the bottom of the canoe, supporting his wounded companion's head, "it don't seem no kind o' use to me fur you ter worry, so long's we've got Little Deadshot with yer. Jist tell ther boy what yer want, 'ef it's ter put a bullet inter ther skull o' ther critter, he'll do it every time, an' not touch a hair o' ther dear gal."

"Can he do that?" asked Flying Foot, eagerly.

"Didn't he knock er beech nut off'n my head 'tother day, an' what's ter that? I mean in the way of a shot."

"Little Deadshot," said Flying Foot, turning to the boy, "do you ink you can wing that rascal! Not kill him, mind! for we've got hear his confession yet, but fix him so that he can't harm the girl?" The boy considered for an instant.

"How would it do if I should break his arm, a little above the bow?" he asked, at length.

"If you can do that the girl is saved, and the villain will be unable to get away."

"I will do it, then," exclaimed the noble boy.

"Now, then," he said, as he stood erect, and prepared to take aim. "Keep the canoe steady where she is, there! that's right, steady w."

The renegade was still descending with his burden, and drawing nearer and nearer to the level of the river. At length he paused for a single instant to make sure of his footing.

Little Deadshot took swift advantage of that pause.

Crack!

The report was followed by an angry yell, and the renegade's right arm dropped useless by his side. For a moment he endeavored to retain possession of the girl by clinging to her with his left arm; this was impossible, as he was obliged to use his hand to assist in his descent.

The quick-witted girl, seeing his embarrassment, twisted herself in his grasp.

He endeavored to seize her again; she thrust him off. He lost his balance, and falling over backwards, rolled down the bluff and into the water.

Those in the canoe sent up a glad shout when they saw the young girl was safe, and then quickly paddled to the spot where the renegade had disappeared.

But the rapid current had carried him to some distance down the stream. At length, as they allowed the canoe to float along, they saw him come up, and finally reaching him, dragged him more dead than alive into the canoe. Then quickly they paddled in shore, where Myra was waiting on the bank to meet them.

"Oh, how glad I am that you came just as you did," she said. "I ought surely to be never see you more, and indeed, that wretched old man you were all dead."

"Let us take him and Seth Sayle to the retreat, and then, sweet girl Honeysuckle, we will hear your story."

With considerable difficulty the two wounded men were conveyed to the place Flying Foot called the retreat.

It was very similar to that other retreat, from which the hoot of an owl had called them forth some days before to save Myra.

Before Flying Foot allowed a word to be said, he had the canoes drawn from the water and brought within the secret den. Then all that man had been near the spot were, so far as possible, obliterated.

After all this had been done, and Seth was made as comfortable as possible, Flying Foot turned to the young girl and asked:

"Now then, Honeysuckle, if you please, how did that miserable old son?"

"It was all my fault, dear sir. Can you ever forgive me? Yes, it was really all my own fault."

"I feared as much. But as no harm has come to you, and as the villain is in our hands, it does not so much matter. Still, I should like very much to know all about it."

"Well, sir," returned Myra, "since you wish it, I will tell you."

"It was very, very lonely here after you had gone, and I could not sleep. I heard all kinds of noises, and imagined all sorts of evils. But one thing was a great comfort to me. You told me that you would return quite early, and so I tried to be patient and wait for morning."

"At length morning came, but you did not come with it. I waited until it was quite light, and then thought I would just venture out and look up the river."

"I did so, taking the greatest care not to expose my person."

"At last I saw a canoe coming down the stream. I could not see how many were in it, and so waited patiently until it should come near enough for me to count them."

"Presently I could see there was only one, and then a great fear came over me. I thought all the rest must be dead."

"In my great anxiety to see who it was that had escaped, I suppose I must have let myself be seen; but I did not mean to do so, and when I discovered that the person in the canoe was a stranger, I crouched down and fled in terror to the retreat."

"For a long time I remained undisturbed, and was happy in the thought that the man in the canoe had continued on his course down the river. Suddenly the wretch made his appearance in the opening there, and, with a sardonic leer, asked me:

"Did yer think yer were goin' ter be too cunnin' fur me, pretty rosebud? Oh, no, that wouldn't do; I've found yet at last, yer see! Ha-ha!"

"Then, as you can well believe, I almost fainted from fright. How he could have found me at all I did not quite understand."

"He saw you on the rock, without doubt," said Flying Foot, "and so went directly there. The rest was easy enough; he had only to follow your trail. True, there was one spot between the summit of the rock and this place where your feet left no impression; that accounts for the length of time it took him to find you."

"I am very sorry I did not remain quietly here and wait for your return," said Myra. "I can now see that I was wrong, but I did not think of it at the time."

"Don't let it fret you any more, sweet Honeysuckle," said Flying Foot, kindly. "Perhaps, on the whole, it is better as it is; otherwise, you know, we might not have the great rascal in our power."

"Ef it's in order now," said Sol Somers, slowly, "I want ter ask fur Seth here an' myself what yer goin' ter do with ther varmint?"

"Little Deadshot and I have some important questions to ask him," responded the somber Indian slayer, "after that—we shall see."

"But yer ain't a-goin' ter run no sort o' risk of his getting away, be yer?"

"Not likely," returned the other, dryly, and the fiendish glitter of his eyes confirmed his words.

CHAPTER XXVII.

LITTLE DEADSHOT FINDS HIS FATHER—FLYING FOOT'S STORY—DEATH OF THE RENEGADE.

"THER critter's a-stirrin'!" suddenly exclaimed the Catamount. "He'll be comin' to hisself afore long, I reckon."

Flying Foot started up and carefully examined the wounded renegade.

After a moment he turned toward the Catamount, and, pointing to a shelf in one corner of the rude hut, said:

"Just hand me that black bottle, if you please."

It was instantly passed to him.

He raised the wounded man's head a little and poured a portion of the bottle's contents down his throat.

After a time the man revived, and, with a deep groan, endeavored to raise himself on his left elbow.

He succeeded at last, and then turned his gaze from one to another of those about him, while an expression of deep hate settled on his expressive countenance.

"Ah! yer've got me at last," he growled, "an' now I suppose yer'll be puttin' me ter ther torture. Fur all yer boastin' thar ain't man enough in any one on yer ter put me ter death at once."

Then, in a lower tone, he muttered:

"Torture! Great God, ain't I sufferin' enough already?"

"See here, Red Wolf, or Lank Larkin, or—whatever your name may be," exclaimed Flying Foot, sternly, "the manner of your death depends very much upon yourself. We want you to make a full confession of your crimes; if you do that, it's more than likely, mercy, such as you would never extend to one of us, were we in your power, will be granted to you."

"Yer wild, Flyin' Foot," cried the renegade, hastily. "I've no confession ter make!"

"Liar—fool!" hissed the Indian slayer. "Takatoka is dead; but before he died he told me all he knew about you. He told me of that cowardly murder of a wife and mother, with her little family, some nine years or more ago."

On hearing this the face of the renegade became of an ashy hue, and his lips were livid as death.

"I—I—" he stammered.

"Man, who are you," suddenly thundered Flying Foot, advancing upon the renegade, with the look of a maniac in his eye, and the hate of a demon in his voice.

"Back! back! Henry Horton, keep back, I say," whined the terror-stricken prisoner.

"Ah-ha! you know me, then," exclaimed the somber hunter, with a terrible look. "Yes, 'tis as I thought; your name—your name; out with it, before I tear your black heart from your bosom."

The cringing wretch essayed to speak, but the words died before they reached his lips.

"Are you William Gibbs? Don't lie, but tell the truth for once in your life."

"Yes—yes, I'm Bill Gibbs. Oh! spare me, Henry."

"Spare you, you wretch! Did you spare me? Where is my wife—my darling Helen? Where are my children? Murderer—villain, answer."

"One is by your side, the rest—you know."

"This then is my son," cried the strange man, casting on Little Deadshot a loving look. "I am sure it is so; I have long suspected as much and have been seeking the truth. Thank God, I am certain of it now."

At this moment, overcome by fear and pain, Lank Larkin, or rather, Bill Gibbs, as was his right name, fainted.

Flying Foot regarded him for a moment in silence, as if uncertain what course to pursue next.

He was suddenly aroused by a voice behind him.

"I don't understand all this, Doctor Henry," and Sol Somers spoke in a sad, despondent tone. "It sorter looks ter me as ef I was about ter lose all I hold most dear on this 'ere airth at one an' ther same time. Here's Seth slippin' away from me, an' now it turns out that Little Deadshot, what I've loved so long an' well, is your boy an' no longer mine."

"Yes—yes, Sol. Little Deadshot is indeed my own son—my little Hal, but be sure he will love you none the less."

"You know that I will always love you just the same, Sol," cried the boy; then turning to his father:

"Is my name really Hal, then? That seems strange."

"Yes; being my first born, you were named for me, Henry, and was always called little Hal by your mother, alas! poor Helen," and a great sob shook the strong man's frame.

"So this 'ere skunk had a hand inter ther murder of your family, Injun Slayer," said the Catamount, suddenly. "Ef it won't stir up yer feelin's too much, I'd like yer tu tell us about it, fur I'd a heap ruther hear it from you than him."

"I will do so, and as briefly as possible," said Flying Foot, with a weary sigh.

"More than fifteen years ago, in the colony of New York, where I had settled to practice medicine, I met the beautiful Helen Golding, and the first moment my eye rested upon her sweet face I loved her."

"Briefly, after a short courtship, she promised to be my wife."

"Then it was I first learned that another man was madly in love with her—one William Gibbs, an unprincipled rascal."

"I didn't consider him worth a second thought, but his attentions

caused my darling, who fairly loathed him, so much uneasiness, that to please and comfort her, as soon as we were married I removed with her to a far distant part of the country, where, there being little or no sickness, I spent much time in the woods hunting and trapping.

"Gradually, a little family grew up about me, of which, as I said a few moments ago, Hal, here, was the first born."

"Vague rumors reached me that Bill Gibbs had left the old settlement, and joined the Indians, warring with them against the whites; but I did not let the news disturb me much, for I had no idea that the one object of the scoundrel's life was to hunt me out, and destroy my life's happiness."

"So it was, however, and at last he was successful."

"He found us, and taking advantage of my temporary absence one day, he came with a horde of redskins at his back, and deprived me of my all on earth."

Here Doctor Horton uttered a groan of anguish, and it was some moments before he could proceed; at length he continued:

"You know—you know, my friends, what followed, and will spare me from entering into details."

"I followed on the trail of the wretches, but after a time the band divided, and I took the wrong trail."

"From that time to this I have been seeking for my son, and for the murderers of my family. I have visited my anger against those Indians who aided and abetted Gibbs, and on all their race, never intentionally sparing one."

"At length I heard that a man answering somewhat the description of Bill Gibbs had been seen in your settlement, Sol; so, quietly, I took up my residence among you, and, as a recluse, under the name of Doctor Henry, watched for his reappearance."

"It was while there that I formed the acquaintance of Sol, Seth and several other scouts; I also met Hal here, and at once my heart went out to him. I offered to become his instructor; my offer was accepted, and after that I had him with me as much as possible."

"I heard his story—what little he could remember of it—and was more and more convinced that he was my son, but I said nothing; wanted to get hold of Bill Gibbs first."

"At length I heard news of him. Young Daniel Boone with whom I had become intimate, and who knew all about my troubles, being my informer."

"I at once started for this country, but after a long search was unable to find Gibbs. I saw this scoundrel several times, but he had changed that I had no idea he was the man I was in search of; and now, at last, it is owing to one of little Hal's lucky shots that I have put into complete possession of all the facts connected with the murder of my family and his own abduction."

"My life work will soon be completed; when I have finished with Bill Gibbs I have the great chief Oganasdoda to look after, as well as such members of his tribe as may yet be alive, who took part in the dastardly massacre. Then I am ready to leave the gloom of the forest and be at rest."

"Injun Slayer—Injun Slayer, I hope ye'll have mercy onter Oganasdoda, fur if that's a good and just Injun on top o' the airth be that one," said the Catamount, earnestly.

"Good and just, I think you said," remarked the Indian slayer dryly.

"If he's ever wronged yer, Flyin' Foot, my word fur it he's sorry."

"Yes, and he befriended Sol and me—saved us from the hate Lank Larkin here," put in Little Deadshot.

"Well—well, we shall see—we shall see," muttered Doctor Horton gloomily.

Bill Gibbs now again revived.

On seeing this, the doctor instantly addressed him.

"Are there many of the Indians who took part in the cowardly murder yet alive?" he asked.

"No," was the reply; "you yourself, at one time or another have killed them nearly all. Nine of the number died last night. Besides Oganasdoda, there are but five living now."

"Who are those five?"

The renegade hesitated for a moment, and then slowly named them.

"I shall not forget," said the somber hunter, in such a tone made the renegade shudder while he listened.

At last, with an effort, he ventured to ask:

"What are you goin' ter do with me?"

"Do you think you ars fit to live?" asked Flying Foot, fiercely. The wretch turned pale as death, and trembled like an aspen. "I know I'm not fit to die," he said, at length. "Well, then," returned the other, abruptly, "take half an hour and prepare yourself." The cowardly wretch who had deprived so many innocent ones of life, began to whimper like a child. An hour later his lifeless body was dangling from the limb of a tree at no great distance from the entrance to the retreat. "Ef ever jnjustice was done on airth, it war when that skunk was hung up," muttered Sol Somers, approvingly. "Amen," murmured Seth Sayle, who was lying in front of the hut where he could see all that passed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONCLUSION.

FLYING Foot stood silently by, gazing on the lifeless form of his bitter enemy, that enemy who had wrecked his happiness in the bright morning of life. At length the Catamount, coming up, touched him on the arm. He awoke, with a start, from his sad reverie, and turned an inquiring look on his strange friend. "Hadn't we better finish up this 'ere little job, Injnn Slayer? Thar's s ter do, yer know, an' time's a slippin' away. We orter be a long stretch from this afore night." "Right—right, my friend," responded the somber hunter, hastily. Cut the wretch down and dispose of his carcass as you think best. It before Little Honeysuckle comes out. I would not that her eyes should see the ghastly sight." In a few moments the dead body of the guilty wretch was lying at the foot of the tree, and a little later, denuded of its scalp, it was borne swiftly down the river by the rapid current. "Doctor—Little Deadshot—Catamount—quick—quick! poor Seth's goin'!"

It was Sol who, in tones of deepest anguish, called to his friends. Immediately all gathered about the dying trapper.

He put out his hand, and as he feebly grabbed that of each, wished them a last good-by.

He even asked for the Honeysuckle, and when Hal had led her forth from the hut, gazed into her sweet face with a pleased look, and slowly said:

"I kin think jist how it'll be, though I shan't live ter see it. But as I see you two a standin' thar tergether now, so I hope yer'll always keep tergether through life. I have lived ter see yer inemies punished, an' now, if it wasn't fur leavin' ye an'—an' poor old Sol here, I should be willin' ter die."

He was silent after that for some moments. Then suddenly starting up, he exclaimed:

"Ah—ah! there is a more beautiful world than this. I see it now. I am going there. Soon in that happy land we shall all meet again. Good-by, friends—good-by, dear old Sol, I—" and he fell back dead.

With tears and sobs they dug his grave, and after a short and earnest prayer by the doctor, they buried him. Then quietly they entered one of the birch-bark canoes, that had been placed upon the water, and floated down the river—down the river, and into the mysteries of the unknown future.

Seven long years passed away.

Little Deadshot was then a man, and one of the most renowned on all our extensive frontier.

Not only was he renowned, but he was the terror of the redskins wherever his deadly name was known, and though he lived much in the forest, and was often the companion of the great Daniel Boone, as well as of old Sol and the Catamount, still he never remained away long at a time from his beautiful wife of a year—his beloved Myra, who, with his little one and the somber browed gentleman, who made it his home at their fireside, quite filled his honest heart.

[THE END.]

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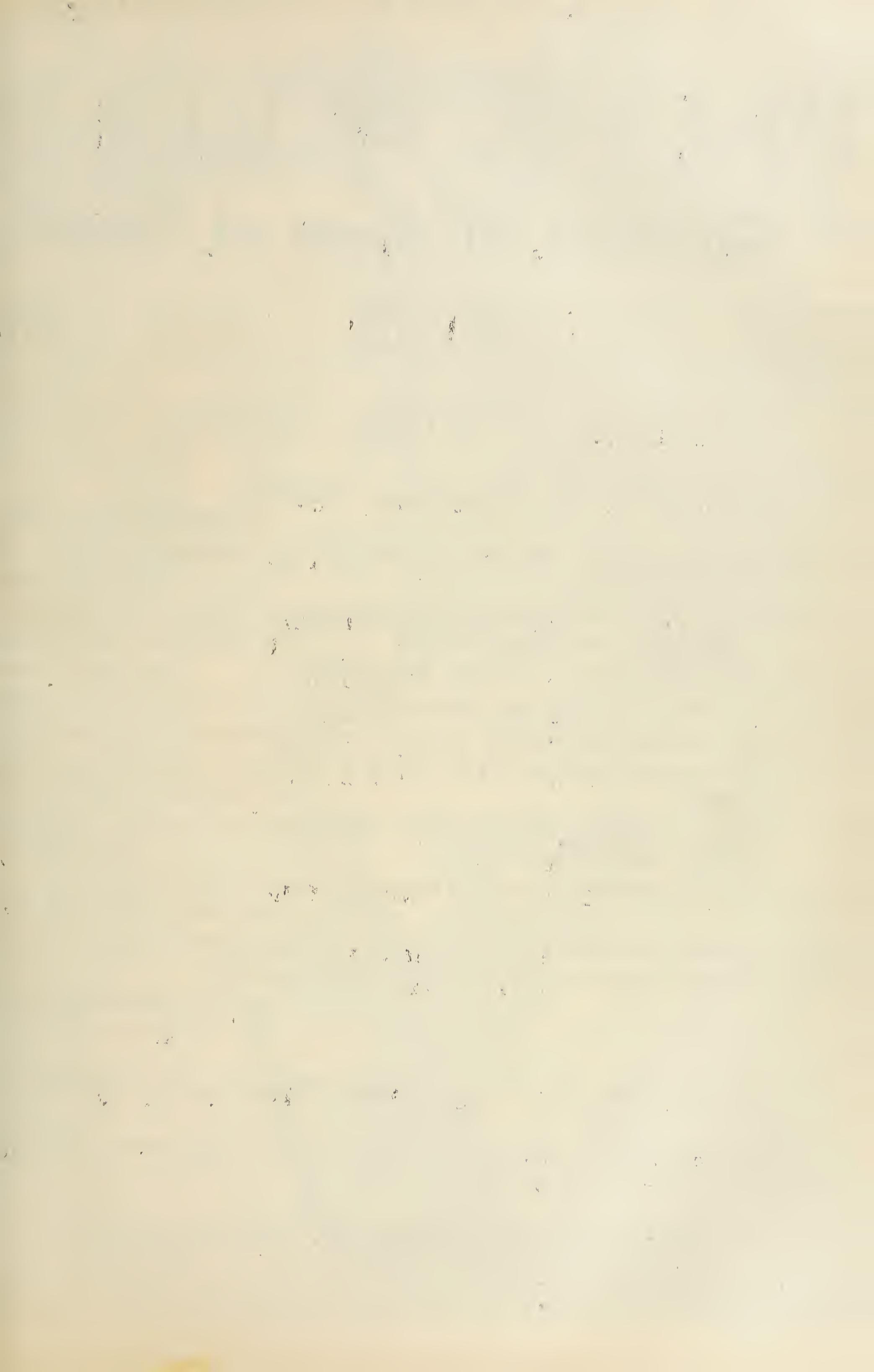
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